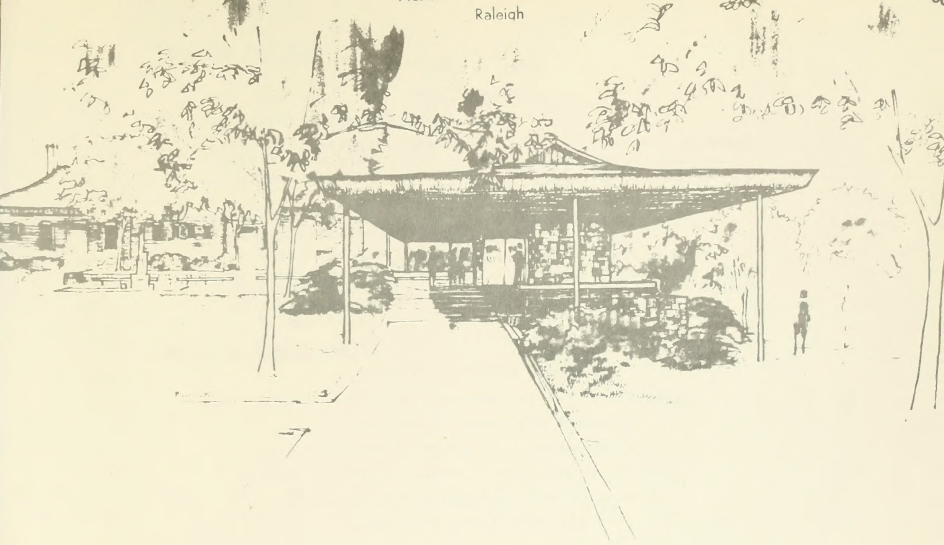


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C. B. D. IMPROVEMENT PLAN APEX , NORTH CAROLINA



C. B. D. IMPROVEMENT PLAN APEX , NORTH CAROLINA



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Prepared for the:

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NORTH CAROLINA

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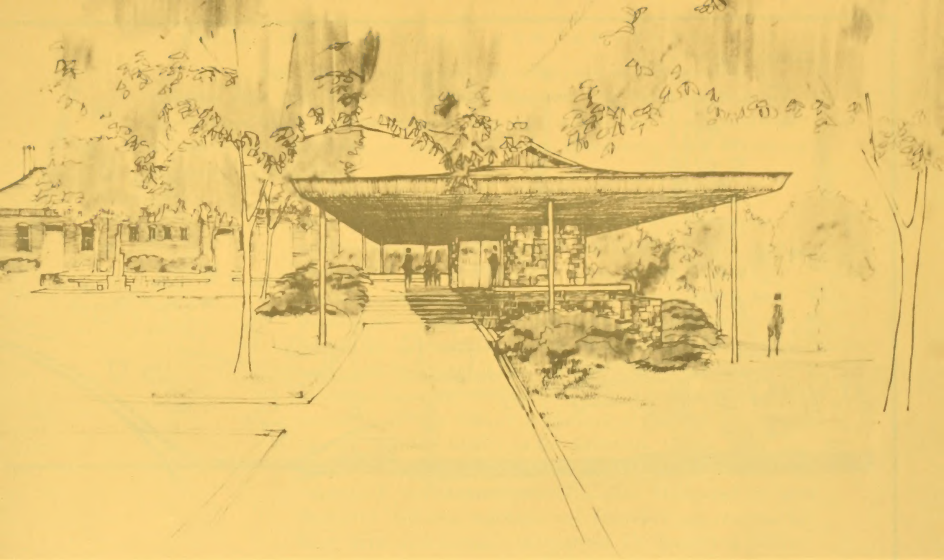
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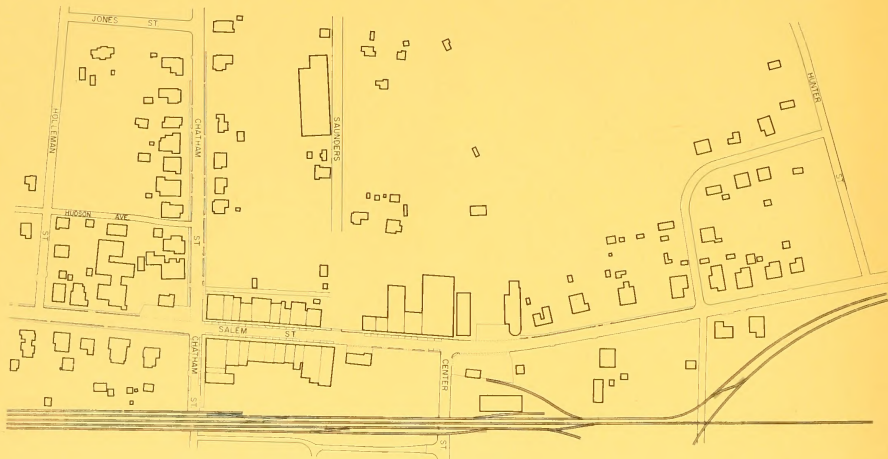
This is a plan to improve the appearance and efficiency of the Apex central business district. It is the result of an intensive, year long effort by the Apex Planning Board, Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Improvement Association and other local groups to achieve for their town a more vital and interesting commercial area. The plan is not intended as an inflexible document that cannot be changed or altered. It is intended as a realistic and workable approach to better business through planned development and rehabilitation.

The improvement plan for the central area is essentially oriented to the future, though it respects the past and recognizes the present.

The central area of Apex could continue to develop without any plan, but such haphazard development would be costly, confusing and mediocre. The reasons for planning in the Apex business district are explained in much detail in the pages to come; however, most of these reasons are apparent to all who know the area. The downtown is congested, there is little room for parking, the appearance is uninviting and the functions or things to do are limited. The Planning Board is not satisfied to claim that these criticisms apply equally to all small-town business centers; on the contrary, the Board sees the surrounding complacency as one of the better reasons for challenging the status quo in Apex. With an attractive business community, the town could become an excitingly dynamic and desirable center of commercial activity.



PLAN OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY



CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

APEX

NORTH CAROLINA



PLAN OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

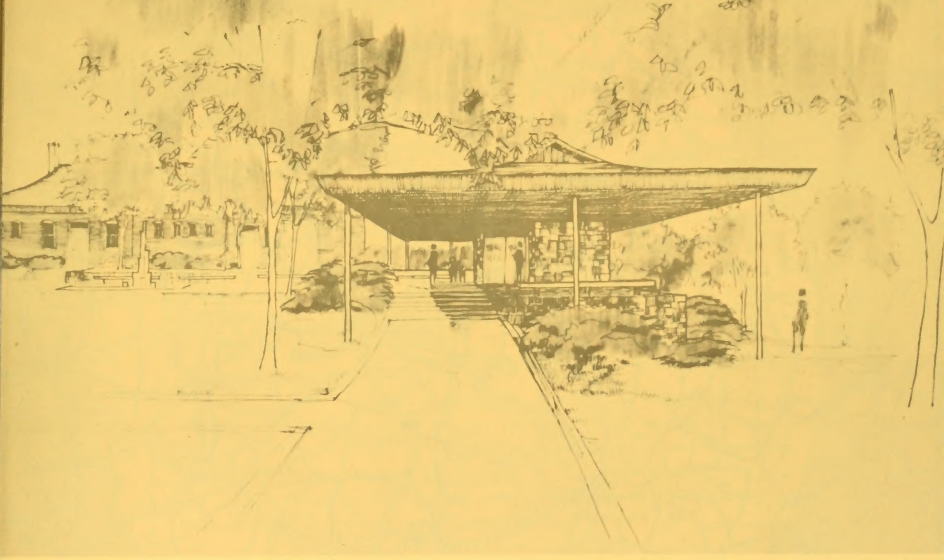
The overall objectives of this plan are to outline a program that will lead to the improvement of the business area's appearance while providing more parking for and better circulation of vehicles. In order to carry out these intentions, the following approach is followed:

1. Background information and basic planning data on Apex are presented in order to give the reader an understanding of the present situation. This first section of the report includes a review of the: regional setting; town history; present and future population characteristics; area economy; work migration patterns; existing land uses; family income levels; traffic and pedestrian circulation systems; parking availability and appearance analysis; activity levels (meaning variety of things the shopper can do besides shop); major services in the CBD; retail trade area and retail trends. The final aspect of the central business area discussed in this analysis section concerns the consumer questionnaires that were distributed throughout the planning area. The results indicate where and why the trade area residents buy, as well as relating the shopper's feelings and opinions of the Apex business community.
2. A compilation of standards and guiding principles for central area beautification and planning are next presented. Terms of reference and basic design

concepts are explained, and examples of improvements in other towns are shown for the reader's consideration. Included are examples of rehabilitated store facades and coordinated approaches to canopy and sign control. In addition, a series of general comments are offered on street and sidewalk materials, plants, benches, fountains, sculptures and other materials used successfully by other towns.

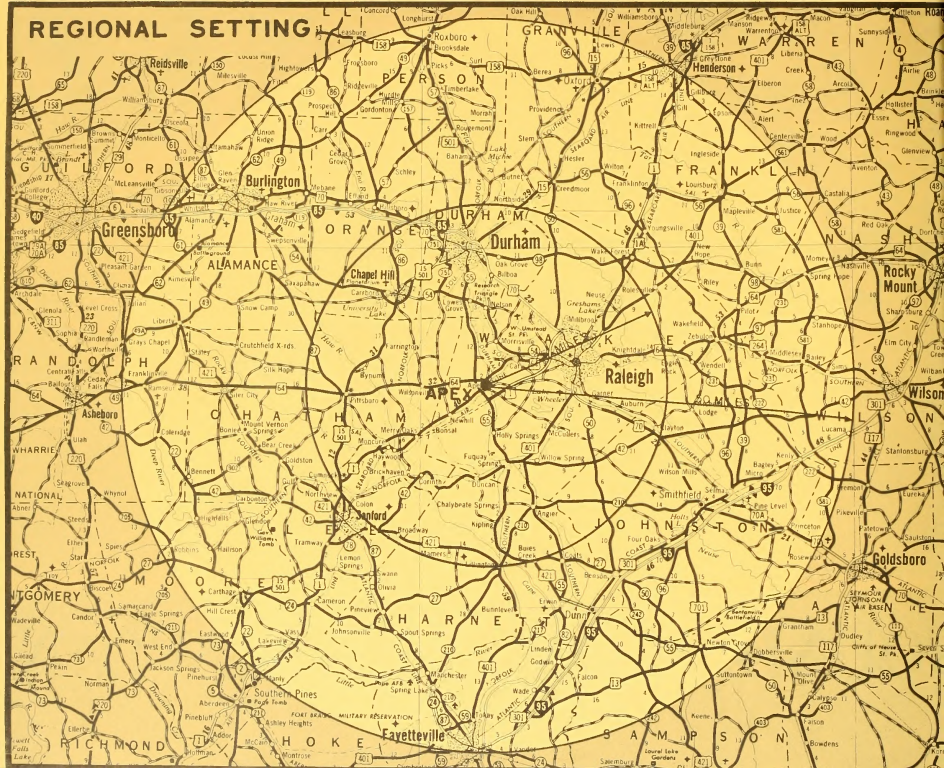
In short then, the purpose of this review is to encourage an understanding of and interest in design principles. Perhaps the merchant who sees photographs and sketches of what has been done elsewhere might get ideas on improvement features that would work in his business community.

3. A preliminary central area plan, with certain design alternatives, is offered for consideration and action. Presented in stages, these recommendations constitute the Apex central area improvement plan.
4. An approach to implementation is suggested with a staged sequence of improvement activities programmed over a period of years.



FOUNDATION FOR THE PLAN

REGIONAL SETTING



Regional Setting

Apex today is a growing small town in Wake County, situated seven miles southwest of Raleigh's corporate limits and eighteen miles south of the City of Durham, respectively. It is well located with regards to the sizable rural fringe populations surrounding the county's large urban area.

Apex is served by three major highways (U.S. 1, U. S.64, and N. C. 55), two railroads (Seaboard Air Line and the Durham and Southern Railroad), and an attractive, modern regional airport (Raleigh-Durham) that is just twenty-five minutes from downtown Apex by car. Thus, it can readily be seen that Apex is favorably located in the highly developed communication system of its surrounding environment.

History^{1/}

Apex began as a railroad station and received its name because it was thought to be the highest survey point on the rail system linking Norfolk and Sanford. Despite the promising name, Apex has not yet reached the height of its potential.

For many years, the town served the Wake County region as a tobacco market and warehouse center.

Soon after incorporation in 1872, the population grew to 700. That population has grown very slowly through the years, as has Apex's economic, cultural and social life. In recent years, the temper of economic and social life forces have been on the move and

^{1.} Certain of these historical facts are taken from the Wake County edition of The State, dated April 15, 1965, Volume 32, Number 23, p. 21.

the sleepy town of Apex has begun to stretch. A large pharmaceutical plant, swimming suit manufacturing company, gas terminal, asphalt plant, community hospital, sewage disposal plant, expanded water system, \$250,000 recreation center, two major highways and a total of \$900,000 worth of buildings were erected, founded or situated in the Town of Apex within the last five years! All signs point to continued growth and development; a central area that is both attractive and efficient will add style and grace to Apex's forward movement.

Population

A recent population analysis of the Town of Apex indicated that growth until 1960 occurred at a very slow rate.^{2/} Considering the fact that the county, state and national populations had increased at rapid rates we would have expected at least a commensurate increment in the Apex population. This expectation was not fulfilled, however, as out-migration denied Apex its share in the population boom. Other trends in the Apex population, noted by Dr. Mann in his recent analysis, showed a sharp increase in the nonwhite population, an older median aged population and predominance of females.^{3/}

In this study, five methods for projecting the size and nature of the future Apex population were suggested and executed. Each of these techniques indicated that Apex could expect a rise in total numbers of people by 1980, ranging from a low estimation of

^{2/} A detailed presentation of the data on which this judgment is based may be found in Dr. Lawrence Mann's study of the Apex Population, published by the Division of Community Planning, August, 1963.

^{3/} Ibid.

1,924 (a 14 percent increase) to the highest estimated possibility of 12,156 (an increase of over 1100 percent!). These projections are all heavily dependent upon the series of stated assumptions; the point being that any way one looks at the situation, Apex is very likely to grow, and grow considerably.

Proof of this assertion was recently demonstrated in the special 1965 census figures for Wake County towns and unincorporated areas. The chart below shows that Apex experienced a 15 percent gain in population from 1960 to 1965:

WAKE COUNTY CENSUS REPORT, 1960 - 1965 ^{4/}

<u>NAME</u>	<u>1960 Census</u>	<u>1965 Census</u>	<u>DIFFERENCE</u>	<u>PERCENT GAIN</u>
Wake County	169,082	197,423	28,341	17
<u>Apex</u>	<u>1,368</u>	<u>1,573</u>	<u>205</u>	<u>15</u>
Cary	3,356	5,330	1,974	59
Fuquay Varina	3,389	3,420	31	--
Garner	3,451	4,282	831	24
Holly Springs	558	625	67	12
Knightdale	622	691	69	11
Morrisville	222	221	-1	--
Raleigh	93,931	105,682	11,751	12
Rolesville	358	355	-3	--
Wake Forest	2,664	2,688	24	--
Wendell	1,620	1,746	126	1
Zebulon	1,534	1,873	339	22
Unincorp. Areas	56,009	68,937	12,928	23

^{4/}U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, "Census Report for Wake County, North Carolina," 1965.

Economic Situation

Apex is not today, and certainly will not tomorrow be like the Apex of the past. The economic and social lifebloods of the town are undergoing a metamorphosis from a rural, immobile, independent, agricultural and contented neighborhood-community to a semi-urban, mobile, dependent, industrial and concerned society. These changes, though not sudden or dramatic, have become over the years increasingly perceptible. The communication system mentioned earlier has opened Apex to the larger Carolina community, increased the town's population, stimulated its economic base and exposed its shortcomings.

Dr. Mann, in his study of Apex's population and economy, noted the high proportion of the town's residents who work outside of its borders (46 percent). Apex residents who work locally are principally employed in manufacturing and retail activities. The two most noticeable and important trends commented upon by this researcher were a continuing decline in agriculture and the merchants lag in adopting modern retailing practices. His comment that "...the visitor to the town cannot but be struck by the general feeling of obsolescence and lack of upkeep that downtown Apex signals," should not be tolerated in silent acceptance. There is too much that can be done about it. Planned revitalization through downtown beauty and efficiency are the keystones upon which an invigorated economic improvement program should be built.

Place of Work

A large percentage of Apex's residents commute out of town every working day. It has been estimated that 37 percent of the

workers are employed in Raleigh and that another nine percent work in other cities and towns outside of Wake County.^{5/} This fact accents the importance a vital central area will have on the future economic well-being of the Town of Apex. Only a pleasurable, attractive and convenient shopping area will survive and prosper when so many convenient shopping facilities exist elsewhere in the vicinity of job locations.

Land Development

Not unlike most small communities, Apex has grown in an unguided manner, having failed to exert public control over private development. As a result, the town suffers from a variety of ills, including but not limited to:

- inadequate street design and street placement, resulting in a one road traffic system. This problem is compounded by limited parking capacities;
- poor lot layouts;
- conflicting land uses; and
- premature obsolescence of industrial, commercial and residential structures.

Today, Apex has zoning and subdivision ordinances, a building code, a planning board and a community with an increasing number of interested, aware citizens. These problems can, with a concerned effort, be mitigated in a short period of time; the same problems can be avoided in the future through conscious attention by responsible officials to a sound, agreed-upon development plan.

^{5.} Lawrence Mann, Population and Economy.

Family Income

The following table graphically expresses the relative position of Apex's family income status with that of the larger environments that encompass it.

D I S T R I B U T I O N O F I N C O M E B Y F A M I L I E S ⁶					
Percent of all Families Earning	Total U. S.	Total N. C.	Wake County	Apex Hinterland	Apex
Less than \$3,000	21.4	37.2	39.1	52.3	33.2
\$3,000 - \$7,999	52.1	49.3	58.6	41.9	48.9
\$8,000 and over	26.5	13.5	12.3	5.8	17.9
Totals	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

This table shows that there is a disproportionately large number of low income families in the outlying areas of the Town of Apex. This hinterland (i.e., rural boundary census tracts outside of Apex's corporate limits) is far behind the National, State, County, and Town income levels. Apex itself has, percentage-wise, more families earning less than \$3,000 annually than either the county or nation. In the following table, a comparison is made between the family income situation in Apex and that of other local towns and jurisdictions:

⁶. Adopted from the 1960 Census of Population; The Dimensions of Poverty, by Micheal Brooks; Population and Economy, Apex, North Carolina, by Lawrence Mann; and Warren Thompson's Preface to Urban Economics.

PERCENT OF FAMILIES WITH INCOMES UNDER \$3,000

Town	Percentage	Size of Population
Apex	33.2	1,368
Cary	11.8	3,356
Fuquay-Varina	35.8	3,389
Garner	16.4	3,451
Total Wake County	29.1	169,082
N. C. State	37.2	4,556,000

As can be concluded from the data presented above, the Town of Apex has a higher percentage of low income families than do all of the above local jurisdictions save one. We are here talking about an income group whom the National Conference on Economic Progress considers to be living under conditions of poverty! What implications do these findings suggest that are relevant to the Apex central area?

At first glance, these findings would appear to offer grim forebodings for the Apex business interests, yet, one of the ironic idiosyncrasies of the market mechanism is that the presence of an unusually large low income population in and around the central area is, owing to the present circumstances, to that Central Business Area's marked advantage. If the income situation were otherwise and the bulk of the population were in a higher

income bracket, then these people more fully could undertake to do their business in Raleigh, Durham, and other large scale, high volume trade areas (where the discount houses offer the lowest priced goods). As a rule, the disadvantaged sectors of the population do not shop in these outlying districts because of the inconvenience and expense of travel and because ingrained customs and acquired habits make local shopping a social as well as an economic occasion. The Town of Apex, and especially those charged with and interested in a more vital core area, ought ever to be conscious of these conditions that are responsible for the continuing viability of the local economy. One meaningful expression of that consciousness would be a vigorous attempt to continue to provide a favorable variety of low cost, useful and fine quality merchandise, and to do so in a pleasing environment that attracts the people and satisfies their needs. Such an environment will be equally attractive to all income groups, and will retain its potency as income levels of the general population increase in proportion to the rising national and state economies.

Other ways of looking at the income situation in and around Apex suggest a more favorable financial situation. Although there is a high percentage of very low income families and although Apex's share of county income totals is rather small, the following table does suggest that Apex is holding its own with other areas in average family income and in per capita income levels:

	Family Income		Average Family Income	Per Capita Income
	Total	Percent of County		
Apex	\$ 2,119,000	0.9	\$5,406	\$1,732
Cary	6,076,500	2.5	6,729	2,024
Fuquay-Varina	4,432,000	1.9	5,196	1,462
Garner	5,865,000	2.5	6,665	1,900
Total Wake Co.	237,292,500	100.0	5,862	1,571
Total N. C.	N/A	N/A	4,838	1,260

A busy commercial center would provide an impetus to the entire Apex economy. For this reason alone, all citizens, not just the merchants, have a stake in downtown development.

Vehicular and Pedestrian Movement System

Access to and egress from the central area of Apex is crowded, unsafe, restrictive and inefficient. It is crowded because the road width measures 36 feet and, with cars parked on both sides of the street approximately 95 percent of the day, only 24 feet remain for automobiles, trucks and other assorted carriers to pass each other while traveling in opposite directions. This fact presents a safety hazard for all vehicular traffic, as well as endangering the lives of pedestrians. It is a restrictive movement system because there is one entrance to the central area from the north, east, south and west -- Salem Street. A person driving into the area from the north, for example, must, after he has accomplished his business, turn around and go back through the same central area he earlier passed in order to return to his destination. This

situation further compounds the already existing slowdown of traffic on Salem Street, thereby inconveniencing those vehicles carrying others who not yet have achieved their own purposes in the area. Finally, the present "circulation" pattern (aptly described by one citizen as an anti-movement system) is inefficient because it does not encourage (and in some cases does not even allow) off-street loading and parking. Considerable opportunities exist in the area, out of and away from the primary business route that, if developed, could easily and economically assume the burden of the above noted tasks. Proposed solutions to these current circulation problems will be presented in the succeeding sections of this report; the point being made here is that the citizen must first recognize the all too obvious shortcomings of the Apex central business area and resolve to consider and adopt action proposals for their alleviation.

No less important than the quality of vehicular movement in the central business area is the level of access this area affords to the pedestrian. This human carrier system ought to be uncrowded, safe, permissive and efficient, but pleasurable and stimulating as well. Measured against these criteria, Apex's pedestrian paths lead to a proverbial nowhere.

The sidewalks along Salem Street are narrow (8 feet), crowded, drab, in a state of disrepair and often cluttered with refuse and merchant displays. Cross-overs are present but are inadequately marked and insufficient in number. Thus, they too are not safe or convenient.

Parking

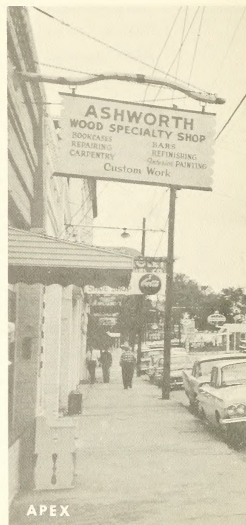
There are 47 separate and distinct stores and/or offices of one kind or another now active in the delineated central business area.

Every one of them requires a given amount of parking space per square foot of floor space. This requirement is expressed as a ratio of one square foot of parking for each square foot of floor space; for primary retail⁷ establishments the ratio is two square feet of parking for each one square foot of floor space.⁸ Therefore, with a total primary retail floor square footage of 15,750, we would expect to find 90 available customer parking spaces; with a total floor footage for all remaining stores, shops and offices totaling 109,900 we would expect to find 314 available spaces, or a total of 404 customer parking spaces in the central area. Unfortunately, the total central section provides, for all customer purposes, only 111 parking spaces! This figure includes 33 off-street parking spaces offered by certain merchants expressly for use of their patrons. It does not include employee parking; there is none. As a result, employees must park behind the Salem Street structures in what are thoroughly disordered, haphazard dumping and loading areas. In addition to this fact, it must be noted that many employees park on Salem Street in spaces that should be available for customers.

Two hour limits are imposed on vehicles parked on Salem Street. This time period is not only excessive but also is unenforced. Result? Valuable parking spaces for persons intending to shop and do business in the commercial center are usurped by individuals who leave their vehicles in the area when working, visiting, relaxing or otherwise engaged in non-purchasing activities.

⁷ Primary retail trade consists of the sale of low bulk comparison and specialty items, such as department, variety, shoe, jewelry and other store products.

⁸ Based on ratios suggested by the Council of Home Builders.



Appearance of the Central Area

Mr. Lely, I desire you would use all your skill to paint my picture truly like me, and not flatter me at all; but remark all these roughnesses, pimples, warts, and everything as you see me, otherwise I will never pay a farthing for it. Oliver Cromwell (1762)

Even a casual glance at the downtown would hide none of Apex's warts. To do so would render the present work, as Mr. Cromwell might say: "Not worth a farthing." Yet, one must admit that better than words the photographs on the opposite page tell a grim tale of age and decline.

All of the shortcomings and unattractive features present in the area did not occur overnight. The decline of a central area is not a sudden event caused by catastrophic forces which leave one particular overall effect. The end result is far deadlier than this, for decline results from an accumulation of many hundreds of separate changes and alterations (or lack of alterations) which combined give the central area its chaotic effect.

There are good, practical reasons why a downtown should be "beautiful as well as healthy, spacious as well as clean." One such reason is that it is good for business. A shabby, rundown appearance will scare away growth opportunities, lessen property values and the tax base and ultimately result in a drastic decline in retail trade. But the truly best justification for beauty is beauty itself; the pride, satisfaction and enjoyment it gives to the community more than repays the hard work, determination and costs involved in its creation.



Activity Level

The central area of any city or town is richly enhanced and rendered far more vital and alive if it serves not only business purposes but recreational, cultural, social, and spiritual interests and needs as well. If all of these close companions of good society are present in a central location, each single activity will complement and increase the worth of the others. In short, there is positive virtue in diversity and we do well to encourage it. How diverse is the Apex central area?

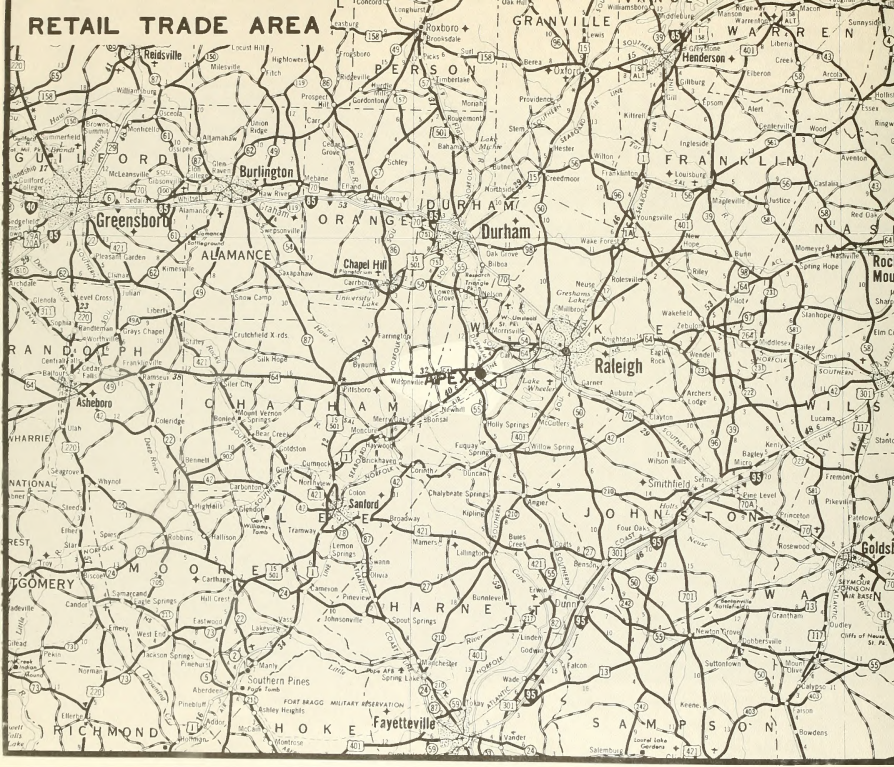
Regrettably, the answer to this question must be "not very diverse." There are only two functions in the downtown area that could reasonably be said to serve recreational, social or cultural needs: (1) the unofficial teen center at the Apex Drug Store, and (2) the Apex Restaurant. In the central area, there are no play provisions made for youngsters, no dance hall, movie theatre, night spot or other activity that could prevent the deadening silence of deserted streets now experienced daily in the central area. After businesses close at the end of the day, the Apex citizen must go elsewhere if he seeks activity.

Major Services in the Central Area

The major services in the Apex central area are retail, administrative, consumer and transport oriented. The activities included in each of these functions and their land area coverages are as follows:

- a) retail - includes shopping activities for general merchandise, clothing, specialty goods and other items of a similar nature. In the Apex central area, 75,000

RETAIL TRADE AREA



square feet, or 1.72 acres, are currently being used for retailing purposes.

- b) administrative - includes the financial and advisory services such as government, welfare, monetary, and professional services. These involve such functions as doctors' offices, lawyers' offices, banks, the Town Hall, the Post Office and similar uses. There are 21,150 square feet of administrative land uses in the Apex central area, or .48 of an acre.
- c) consumer - includes establishments providing services to the person, such as restaurants, barber shops, pool halls, hotels, and similar uses. In the central area there are 29,500 square feet of consumer oriented land space, or a total of .68 of an acre.
- d) transport - includes all rights-of-way that provide for the conveyance of passengers and freight from place to place. Not counting the railroads as a part of this central area study, analysis reveals that transport purposes still consume 242,255 square feet of land, or 5.56 acres. This includes streets, driveways and parking areas within the delineated study area.

Retail Trade Area

The distance over which a business center exerts a positive pull can never be measured with precision and exactitude, but it can be measured. One favorite method for doing this is the mathematical formula known as Reilly's Law of Retail Gravitation. The principal behind this concept is that people usually will trade in the largest urban center which is most easily accessible, all other

things being equal. Applying Reilly's Law to Apex's central area indicates a trade area extending roughly 1.5 miles northeast from the center of town in the direction of Raleigh, 2.3 miles due north toward Durham, 10.8 miles west toward Pittsboro, 6.5 miles southwest toward Sanford, 4.7 miles south toward Fuquay-Varina and 2.3 miles northeast toward Cary. From within this trade area, Apex businessmen can expect to draw their clientele.

Trends in Retail Sales

Perhaps in the final analysis, after all the facts are in and the situation is almost fully understood, the most important measure of a central area is whether or not it sells! Is the area making money? Is it growing, both in volume and relative to other local areas? The answers to these vital questions can be determined by an examination of the following table!

+ TRENDS IN RETAIL SALES 1954 - 1963 FOR SELECTED AREAS								
	1954 Sales (\$1,000)	Percent of Co. Sales	1958 Sales (\$1,000)	Percent of County's Sales	Percent of County's Sales	1963 Sales (\$1,000)	Percent County's Sales	Percent Change 1958 - 1963
Cary	\$ 2,265*	1.5%	\$ 3,384*	1.8	+49.4	\$ 3,979	1.6	+17.6
Fuquay Varina	\$ 2,615*	1.7	\$ 3,539*	1.9	+35.3	\$ 10,726	4.3	+203.1
Garner	\$ 1,216*	0.8	\$ 1,895	1.0	+55.8	\$ 3,184	1.3	+68.0
Raleigh	\$ 112,102	73.1	\$136,070	73.6	+21.4	\$181,416	73.5	+33.3
Wake Forest	\$ 4,131	2.7	\$ 2,765	1.5	-33.1	\$ 5,150	2.1	+86.3
Apex	\$ 1,210	0.8	\$ 1,487	0.8	+22.9	\$ 1,905*	0.8	+28.1
Rem. of County	\$ 29,714	19.4	\$ 35,917	19.4	+20.9	\$ 40,463	16.4	+12.7
Wake County	\$ 153,253	100.0	\$185,057	100.0	+20.8	\$246,823	100.0	+33.4

* Estimated figures, based on county per capita retail sales determined and applied to area population.

The table on the opposite page shows that Apex has increased its total retail sales at a steady rate from 1954 to 1963; however, it can also be seen that Apex's percentage of the county totals has remained the same while other towns have increased their percentages of the county's sales (see Cary, Fuquay-Varina and Garner). Apex seems to be running hard in order to stay in the same place.

An examination of retail sales relative to personal income also suggests that Apex is not operating at its highest efficiency and thus not realizing its highest potential economic gain. The key to an understanding of the following table is the expected ratio that the State computes from past averages of income to retail sales.

These averages show how much retail dollars a local business area can expect to attract on the basis of how many dollars are earned by the inhabitants of the local area. In 1959, the State average showed that a local business district could expect to attract .6728 percent of all dollars earned by the residents of that business district's total area. This means that an area with a given amount of income (x) should expect to gain in retail sales .6728 percent of every dollar earned, thus giving the trade area (y) amount of retail sales. For example, if the total income in the Town of Apex were \$1,000, Apex could, if the state average were to hold, expect \$672.80 in retail sales. With this understanding in mind, what then can we conclude about Apex's ability to capture its share of the potential trade? As is clearly indicated on the following table, Apex is not drawing people to its central area as it could and should be doing. The town is, in fact, actually losing approximately \$106,891 dollars annually, for the retail sales fall this much short of equalling

what would be expected if the state-wide ratio of retail sales to personal income were realized in Apex. It is small comfort that Cary and Garner are losing out also, and by greater percentages. These towns are moving downhill, and Apex would do well to choose more progressive communities with which to compete. In addition, it must be realized that Cary and Garner are closer to Raleigh than is Apex, and thus adversely affected business-wise by the drawing power of Raleigh's big city commerce.

1958 RETAIL SALES RELATIVE TO 1959 PERSONAL INCOME

	<u>Apex</u>	<u>Cary</u>
1959 Total Personal Income	\$2,369,042	\$6,793,527
1958 Total Retail Sales	\$1,487,000	\$3,384,000
Retail Sales as % of Income	62.8%	49.8%
Expected Sales if State R.S./Income Ratio* is applied to area income	\$1,593,891	\$4,570,685
Difference - actual from expected	\$ -106,891	\$ -1,186,685
	<u>Fuquay-Varina</u>	<u>Garner</u>
1959 Total Personal Income	\$4,955,186	\$6,557,070
1958 Total Retail Sales	\$3,539,000	\$1,895,000
Retail Sales as % of Income	71.4%	28.9%
Expected Sales if State R.S./Income Ratio* is applied to area income	\$3,333,849	\$4,411,597
Difference - actual from expected	\$ +205,151	\$ -2,516,597

* N. C. Ratio = .6728

The discrepancy noted above would no doubt be far more severe if results were computed for Apex's retail "score" with regard to the delineated trade area. The population for this area is 3,532 people. The expected sales to be gained from this area, if the State's retail sales to personal income ratio were to apply, would be a whopping 3,839,284.dollars!

The above data suggest that the Apex central business area has enormous and exciting potential as a trade center. What has been said up until this point has related to the past and present conditions that impede its development. What follows in the coming sections will be proposals for alleviating these conditions and "blueprints" or "policy plans" for central area revitalization.

Consumer Survey

In late 1965, a detailed study was made of shopper and resident attitudes toward the Apex central business district. Specifically, four major areas were explored in mailed surveys to persons living in the town's hinterlands. These areas of survey concentration, and the predominant responses to the questions, are presented in the analysis below:

A. Convenience and Appearance

More than any other question, people quizzed on the number of things to do in Apex replied that the activity level is pretty low. Other "popular" or common responses were to the effect that parking, store front appearance, street furniture, product selection, traffic and sidewalk conditions and commodity price levels all leave something to be desired.

B. Place of Purchase by Type of Goods

Apex merchants are in competition with their peers in surrounding commercial areas, and the economy of the entire town is affected by this rivalry. How great a market share are local businessmen able to capture with regards to given products and services? The second phase of the questionnaire asked people to note the city or town wherein they bought certain types of goods; the information thereby gathered provided the answer to the above question.

Medicine and drugs, lumber and building supplies, hardware and appliances, groceries, and insurance are overwhelmingly purchased in Apex. On the other hand, more automobiles, wearing apparel, furniture, and farm equipment are purchased elsewhere than are bought in Apex. Perhaps a rejuvenated commercial center will accentuate the former set of conditions and mitigate the losses of the latter.

C. Sample Characteristics

All persons chosen for testing in the sample population lived in the area surrounding the corporate limits of Apex (the hinterlands). Most were farmers by occupation, though many considered themselves skilled laborers. Three times as many males participated as did females, and the large majority of interviewers were in the 40-64 year age group. Those who responded to the questionnaire claimed to average two or more trips per week to the central area of Apex for shopping purposes.

D. Open-Ended Responses

In order to give persons an opportunity to "sound off" about the Apex central area, four questions were designed to encourage random comment. These were as follows:

1. Please list any activities (or other store types) you feel Apex should have in its central area: _____
2. If you owned a shop in the business area, what would you like to see done to improve it? _____
3. What are the things you like most about the area?

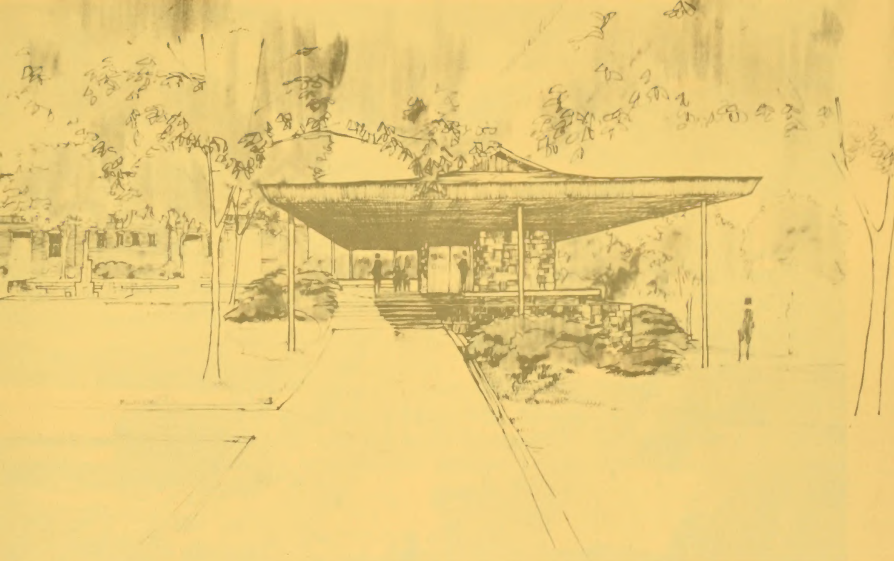
4. What are the things you like least about the area?

People responded to these questions by discussing at some length their feelings about a variety of matters, some relevant to the Apex central area and some not. Three-fourths of the respondents expressed an interest in more activities, mentioning movie theatres, recreation or park areas and food and drink establishments as being most badly needed. Half the respondents would spruce up the store fronts if they owned establishments in the area. Most would provide more parking and better sidewalks. Friendliness of the merchants and people in Apex was the single most frequently noted asset of the downtown named by respondents as the feature they especially liked about the area. The unpleasant appearance was one feature least liked, along with frequent traffic congestion.

The preponderance of public opinion, as judged from the preceding questionnaire analysis, supports the contentions reported earlier in this report, namely, that the appearance of the business district is unattractive, that parking space is scarce and that vehicular circulation is clogged.

Much can be done to overcome these characteristics of age and obsolescence in the central area. Many of the sketches and tables on the succeeding pages show what other commercial areas have accomplished through coordinated design efforts. Apex officials should consider these accomplishments in the light of local needs, and adopt appropriate innovations to the general up-grading of the commercial center.





DESIGN ELEMENTS IN THE DOWNTOWN



S T A N D A R D S A N D G U I D I N G P R I N C I P L E S

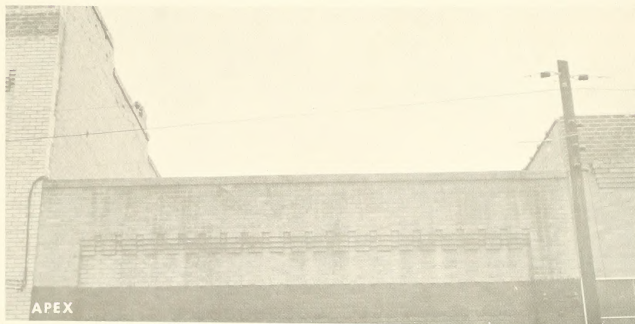
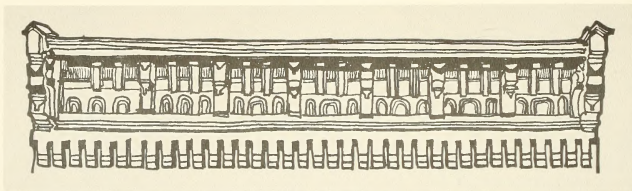
This section is presented in order to provide the reader with the fullest possible understanding of prevailing standards, principles, and techniques available for revitalizing central areas. The approach utilized is a general one and the designs noted in other towns should not be considered as specific recommendations for Apex. Many of the ideas and materials that have been successful in other towns will not be effective in Apex; others not yet considered might enhance the town's appearance.¹

The design factors are presented, whenever possible, with reference to the Apex central area. Visualize the area adorned with some of the materials shown and think of the effect each feature might lend to the whole if blended into the present site.

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1. Certain illustrations and photos have been extracted from other Community Planning reports, primarily Jerry M. Turner's Downtown Albemarle and Larry T. Sabiston's Guidelines for Improving the Wilson Central Business District.

FACADES

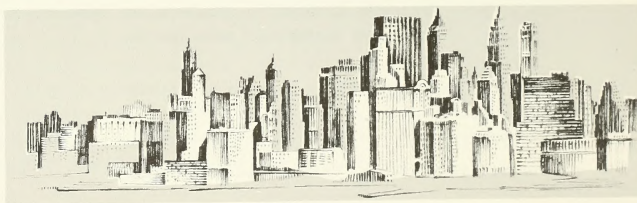
A) Parapet wall lines are the top-most layer of a building facade and as such have an important influence on the appearance of the individual structure.



More importantly, where the central city is concerned, the effect rendered by a series of side-by-side building parapets is often, for better or for worse, striking. Too often, their combined effect is for the worse and certainly not in the best interests of any single building facade.



The difference seen in wall lines that are many stories apart is often pleasant and occasionally striking. Manhattan's skyline is both, owing to contrasts in the extreme.



Small towns can become more pleasant for the opposite reason: their building masses are in agreement, contrast appears with overall complementarity.



THREE GENERAL PRINCIPLES THAT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED IN IMPROVING PARAPET LINES ARE:

1. WALLS CLOSE TO BEING AT ONE LEVEL SHOULD BE EVENED;
2. BUILDING FACADES WHICH HAVE PARAPET WALL LINES VARYING BY MORE THAN ONE-FOURTH OF THE BUILDING HEIGHT SHOULD BE ACCENTUATED; and
3. WHERE EITHER OF THE ABOVE ACTIONS ARE NOT FEASIBLE, PARAPET LINES MIGHT BE CLEANED, PAINTED, OR SAND FINISHED IN ORDER TO OBTAIN A NEW EMPHASIS ON A FORGOTTEN ELEMENT OF GOOD DESIGN. ²

² Turner and Sabiston, Central Area Reports.

B) Upper floors, that section of building which extends below the parapet line to the ground window, sign, or canopy, are most useful in a design sense when they are de-emphasized.



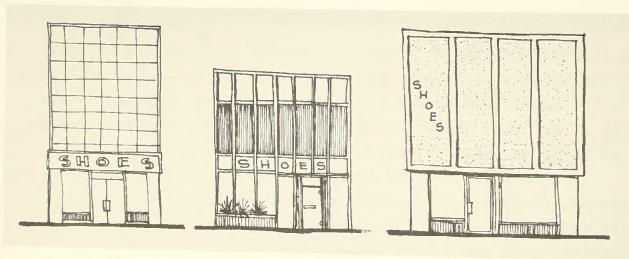
A simplified building front in a central area creates a more orderly and less chaotic image by reducing the visual confusion of the upper stories and drawing attention to the first floors. Too often these areas become "wastelands," their use abandoned and their maintenance neglected in favor of the lower levels.

Often a thorough cleaning or a low-cost paint job is all that is necessary to brighten and improve the general appearance of the upper levels, and thus consequently enhance the impression one receives from the entire store front.

PRINCIPLES FOR THE OPTIMUM TREATMENT OF UPPER FLOOR LEVELS

ARE

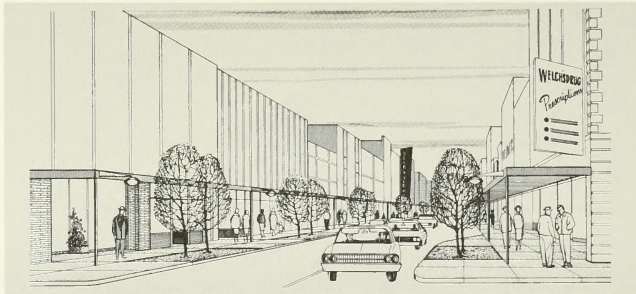
1. THE ENTIRE FACADE SHOULD BE TREATED AS ONE DESIGN ELEMENT RATHER THAN GIVING EACH FLOOR INDIVIDUAL TREATMENT;
2. UNNECESSARY OBJECTS HANGING FROM OR ATTACHED TO UPPER FLOORS SHOULD BE REMOVED, SUCH AS OLD OR OVERSIZED SIGNS, DETERIORATED AWNINGS, AND ALL OTHER SUCH JUNK; AND
3. UPPER FLOORS SHOULD BE DE-EMPHASIZED, WITH PRINCIPAL CONSIDERATION GIVEN TO THE OVERALL EFFECT ON OTHER STRUCTURES THAT ANY SINGLE FLOOR MIGHT HAVE.³



3. Ibid.

C) Canopies provide protection from the elements, and if used to their best advantage, positively contribute to the appearance of the surrounding area.

Canopies vary in size, material, and style. If that variation is too great and general maintenance is bad, they will add nothing and detract from general appearances. A unified canopy plan will offer full customer protection and will make identification of shops much easier for the pedestrian (for whom the central area should be oriented in the first place).



A unified canopy scheme needs merchant enthusiasm and should not be undertaken as a panacea in lieu of other needed improvements such as landscaping, sidewalk repair and widening, replacement of outdated street furniture, and other needed projects.

PRINCIPLES FOR CANOPY UTILIZATION ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- a) IF A UNIFIED SCHEME IS CHOSEN, CANOPIES SHOULD BE KEPT SIMPLE. ONLY A FEW COLORS AND MATERIALS SHOULD BE USED.
 - 1. THE CANOPY LEVEL SHOULD BE AS UNIFORM AS POSSIBLE ALONG THE ENTIRE BLOCK;
 - 2. THE CANOPY AND ITS SUPPORTS SHOULD BE PLANNED AND COORDINATED WITH SUCH ITEMS AS PARKING METERS, DRAINAGE SPOUTS, STREET SIGNS, AND OTHER UTILITARIAN OBJECTS; AND
 - 3. THE FINAL SELECTION OF EXACT TYPE, COST, AND STYLE OF CANOPY SHOULD BE MADE AFTER CONSULTATION WITH AN ARCHITECT.
- b) IF STORES PROVIDE THEIR OWN CANOPIES, AN ATTEMPT SHOULD STILL BE MADE TO USE A MINIMUM NUMBER OF MATERIALS, COLORS, STYLES, AND SIZES OF CANOPIES; AND EACH CANOPY SHOULD RELATE TO ALL THE REST.



D) Pedestrian levels are probably the most obvious element of building appearance. This level is the meeting place of merchants and prospective customers. Too often, it is the meeting place of disparate and clashing colors, textures, scales, and styles.



It is wise when reconsidering the design of the central area to contemplate the use of a limited quantity of given materials. Used together indiscriminately, the overall effect of copious materials is chaos and garishness. Thus, each material ought to be evaluated with regard to its individual characteristics, its effect on the neighboring materials, and the manner of its prospective use. Considering the high potential for either beauty or blight it is good policy to retain the services of an architect.

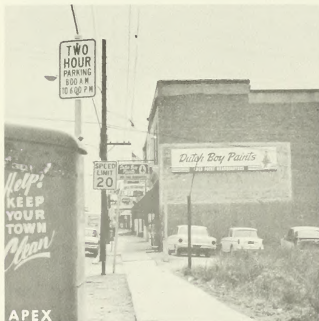
PRINCIPLES FOR THE STRUCTURING OF PEDESTRIAN LEVELS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. PROVISION SHOULD BE MADE FOR THE FREE FLOW OF PEDESTRIAN TRAFFIC BY THE USE OF RECESSED STORE FRONTS;
2. AS WITH CANOPIES, SIMPLICITY IS A VIRTUE; AND
3. BECAUSE HIGHLY REFLECTIVE SURFACES AND MATERIALS USUALLY APPEAR "IMPERSONAL" AND "COLD" RATHER THAN "INTIMATE" AND WARM," MAT FINISHED SURFACES SHOULD BE USED WHICH GIVE THE LATTER EFFECT.

Store signs can destroy the dignity and attractiveness of any building, no matter how fine it otherwise would appear. Fred Bair, a nationally famous planner, once pointed out that

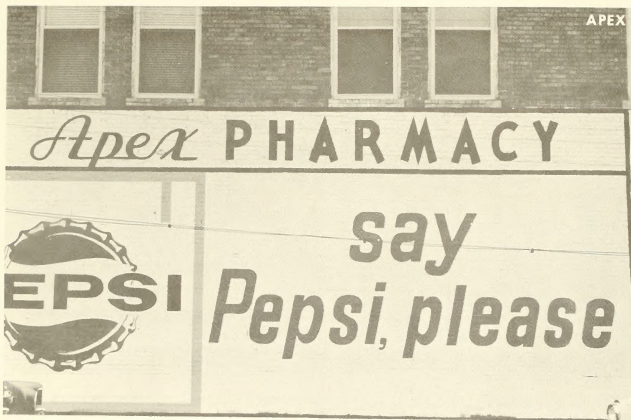
A few pigeons in the park are only a few pigeons in the park. A whirling horde of pigeons becomes the pigeon menace. There can be too much of almost anything.⁴

In most central areas today, there are "whirling hordes" of signs. Modern advertising and electricity combined with indiscriminate size and placement, have "menaced" their appearance.

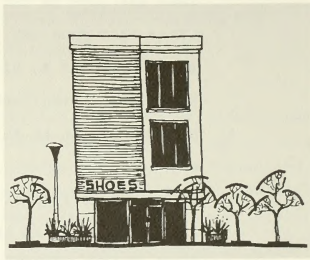
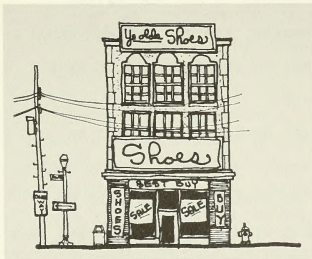


4. Perry L. Norton, ed., Bair Facts: The Writings of Frederick H. Bair, p. 70.

Signs are most functional when they are used intelligently in relation to the scale of store fronts. These examples suggest that there are five elements which must be considered in the evaluation of any sign. They are location or placement, size and shape, letter styles, background colors, and materials. These elements must harmonize in order to achieve a pleasing relationship in a business area. Of all the above mentioned elements, it is the first two that are most often violated.



Despite the variety of ways in which signs may be hung and the infinite types of placement possible, if abundant they usually destroy the very purpose for which they are constructed. This occurs because their numbers, great sizes, and bizarre shapes often compete with their neighbors (trying to out-shout the other) resulting in a roar in which none are heard.



IF THE VISUAL APPEARANCE OF APEX'S CENTRAL AREA IS EVER TO BE AN ASSET TO THE REGION AND PROFITABLE UNTO ITSELF, THEN THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES SHOULD SERVE AS A GUIDE TO IMPROVING THE SIGN SITUATION:

1. EACH ESTABLISHMENT OUGHT TO HAVE ONLY ONE SIGN
(WITHOUT PRODUCT ADVERTISEMENTS);

2. THE MAXIMUM SQUARE FOOTAGE SHOULD BE LIMITED TO THREE TIMES THE LINEAL FEET OF THE BUILDING FRONTAGE;
3. NO SIGN OR LETTERING SHOULD PROJECT ABOVE THE BUILDING'S PARAPET WALL;
4. PROJECTING SIGNS SHOULD BE LIMITED TO 42 INCHES FROM THE FACE OF THE BUILDING, A MINIMUM HEIGHT OF 12 FEET FROM THE SIDEWALK, AND THE MAXIMUM AREA ALLOWED SHOULD BE LIMITED TO TWO TIMES THE LINEAR FEET OF BUILDING FRONTAGE;
5. NO SIGN SHOULD BE PAINTED OR PASTED DIRECTLY ON ANY WALL;
6. SIGNS ARE SO IMPORTANT TO BUSINESSES AND HAVE SUCH AN INFLUENCE ON AN AREA'S VISUAL CHARACTER, THAT THEY OUGHT TO BE DESIGNED BY PROFESSIONALS AND COORDINATED WITH BUILDING FACADES AND THE DISTRICT'S DESIRED DESIGN MOTIF;
7. THE MERCHANTS AND PROPERTY OWNERS WITHIN AT LEAST ONE BLOCK AND POSSIBLY THE ENTIRE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT SHOULD ADOPT A LIMITED NUMBER OF LETTER

STYLES, COLORS, AND MATERIALS FROM WHICH INDIVIDUAL CHOICES MIGHT BE MADE;

8. MATERIALS USED IN CONSTRUCTING SIGNS SHOULD BE DURABLE, THE ACCENT SHOULD BE ON LEGIBILITY AND THE CHOICE OF COLOR ON ANY ONE SIGN SHOULD BE LIMITED; FINALLY,
9. ALL INDIVIDUAL SIGNS SHOULD BE DESIGNED WITH REFERENCE TO A PLAN FOR BUILDING COLORATION.⁵

These standards are minimum requirements. Dependence should not be placed upon these or any other rules in attempting to secure a harmonious placement of signs; rather, an understanding of and an appreciation for the controlled use of signs is the most desirable approach in any drive to secure common sense in the use of signs.

5. Turner and Sabiston, op. cit.



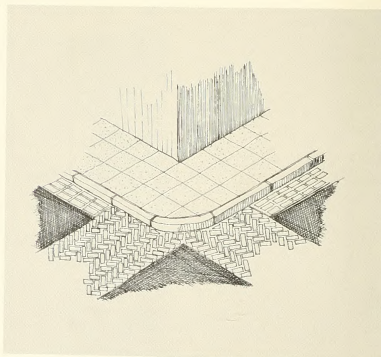
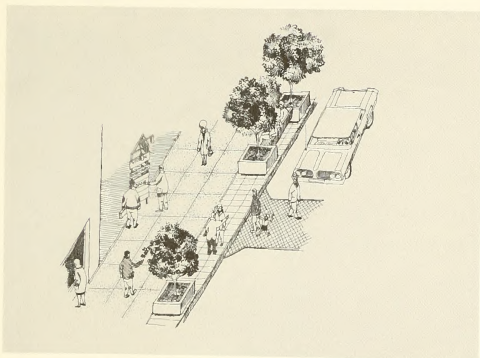
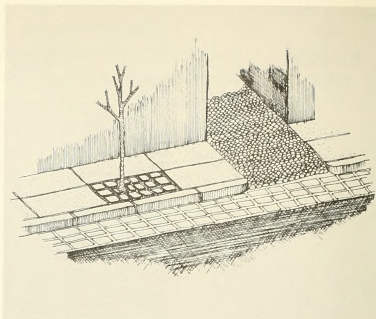
Street furniture, such as directional signs, traffic lights, mailboxes, trash receptacles, paving materials, etc., contributes considerably to the visual worth of a business district. Too often, merchants become accustomed to the gradual attrition of an area and inadvertently overlook the cluttered saturation that steadily grows in and around their business area. The customers, however, being less frequent inhabitants, often feel what the merchants cannot see.

A FEW PRINCIPLES RELATING TO THE JUDICIOUS PLACEMENT AND USE OF STREET FURNITURE ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. ITEMS NOT ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY SHOULD BE ELIMINATED AND OTHERS COMBINED INTO AS FEW ITEMS AS POSSIBLE;
2. ONE DESIGN AND ONE COLOR SHOULD BE USED FOR EACH TYPE OF STREET FURNITURE (TRASH RECEPTACLES, FIRE HYDRANTS AND BOXES, DIRECTIONAL SIGNS, AND ALL THE REST); AND
3. AN INCONSPICUOUS LOCATION SHOULD BE FOUND FOR NECESSARY STREET FURNITURE (UTILITARIAN OBJECTS) WHEREAS CONVENIENCE TYPE STREET FURNITURE SHOULD BE PLACED IN A CONSPICUOUS PLACE IN ORDER TO ACCENT AND ENHANCE THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE STREET SCENE.



APEX

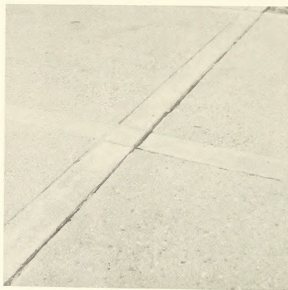
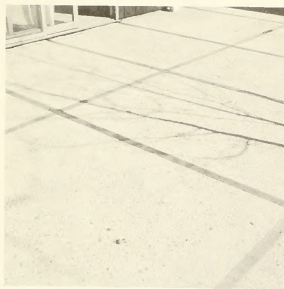
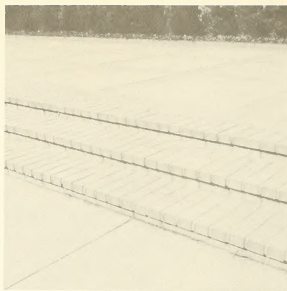


PAVING
MATERIALS

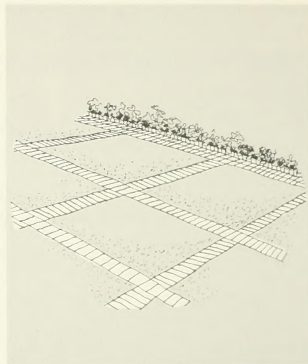
Not often considered a design element in the earlier years of central area development, textured-patterned sidewalks and crossings are today an outstanding feature in imaginatively constructed shopping centers and renewed downtowns.

Usually paving materials are chosen on the basis of economy, an unfamiliarity with other available materials, and a general non-concern for aesthetic considerations. Yet, asphalt and concrete are not the only materials in existence. A change in pavement pattern can be a wonderful pedestrian experience and also can be used to signal a change in area. Such a change can also be justified as a safety feature, for if properly placed it can alert the pedestrian to an alley crossing, intersection, etc. Although plain white paint is inexpensive and simple to use as a traffic lane and crosswalk marker, it is preferable to have a more interesting composition in the central area. A ten foot wide strip of brick running across the main street can be highly effective both as visual relief and as inducement for proper street-crossings. If this were done, the central area would gain a good deal of character and visual harmony.

The pictures shown on the following page are examples of concrete used in an unconventional manner. The different finishes and patterns largely depend on the final troweling of the surface, the size, and the exposure of the aggregate and material used in expansion jointing.

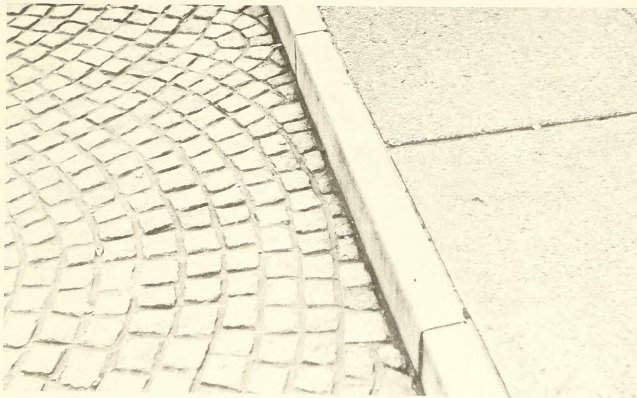


Brick may be used to dignify the downtown, especially if an old world atmosphere or feeling of formality should be desired. Many finishes are possible with brick; the most common patterns are running bond, herringbone, and basket weave.

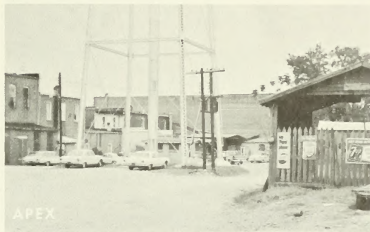


Regardless of the finish, the use of brick provides a smooth surface which is quite pleasant to walk on, being neither slick nor rough. In addition, brick is compatible with most building materials.

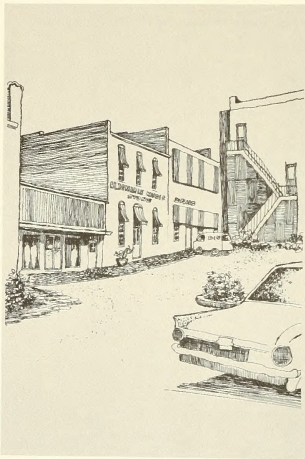
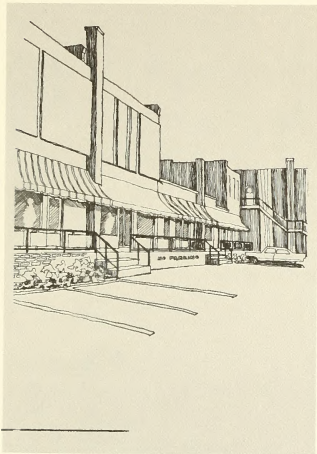
Cobblestone is the oldest paving material in use today. Some of the loveliest, most charming areas in this country derive part of their beauty from cobbled sidewalks, streets, and small plots. Georgetown, San Francisco, Liberty Square in Philadelphia, and Williamsburg are examples. Before bricks, cobblestones were common; but vehicular transportation, limited supplies, and high installation costs have caused a decline in their use through the years. Their use, therefore, should be restricted to a limited area, the character of which (desired or actual) will lend itself to cobblestone treatment.



Rear yards and back alleys need not look like town dumps. They can, in fact, be attractive, pleasing and very functional. Apex merchants are overlooking an opportunity to provide more parking, enlarge their shopping area, and draw more customers by failing to develop this potential. The situation depicted below should be corrected.



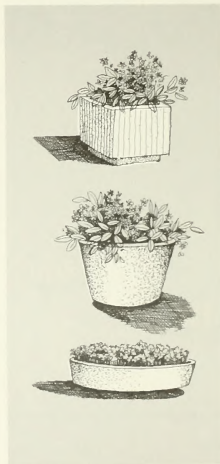
Though not an original concept, few areas in North Carolina (or elsewhere) have yet to develop front and rear shopping opportunities. Below are sketches showing Mr. Turner's proposals for rear improvement in Albemarle.⁶

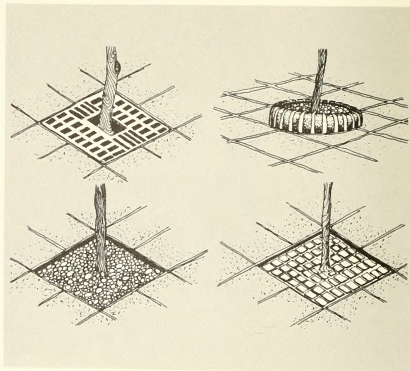
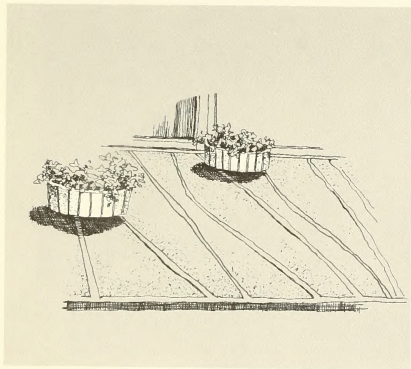
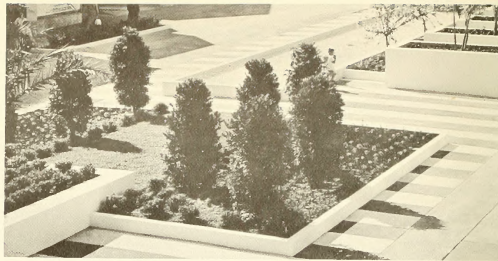
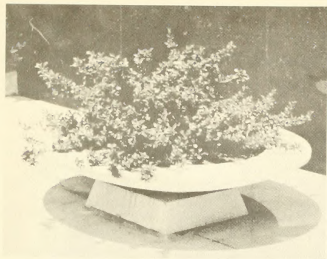


⁶ Downtown Albemarle by Jerry M. Turner, Division of Community Planning, 1965.

PLANTS

Plants used in a central area provide a refreshing touch of nature and fertility in an otherwise arid, commercial desert. Though they are difficult to maintain, their effect, if used with discretion, is worth the time-cost. Planters may be temporary or permanent, and numerous materials can be used as containers for the selected plant types.





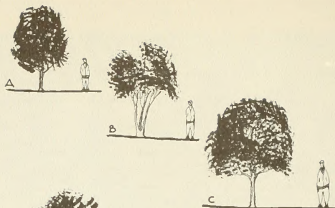
Trees are rare in the Apex central area. Years ago, they were uprooted and destroyed in order to provide room for progress and growth. Today, there is a need to "recall" the trees to the central area, if progress and growth are to continue. A tree should be considered one of the most natural amenities obtainable in a revitalized area, and its virtues have been established by poets and romanticists for centuries.



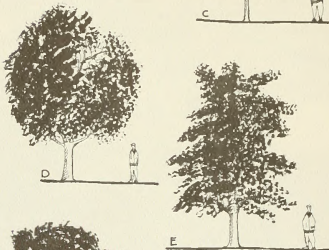
There are, of course, wide varieties of tree types as well as planting styles. A grid street pattern should be treated with irregular tree spacing to de-emphasize the built-in rigidity. When planting trees, care must be taken not to block pedestrian movement or interfere with utilities. Scale must be respected and provision ought to be made for periodic care and treatment. Examples of tree types appropriate for use in a downtown area (reasonable size, durability, cost, and appearance) are listed on the following page.

SMALL TREES

- A. *Ilex opaca* *fosteri* #2
Height 18 - 20 feet, Spread 6 - 8 feet
This is a very hardy handsome tree, a cross between *Ilex cassine* and *Ilex opaca*. It is pyramidal shaped with evergreen foliage.
- B. *Lagerstroemia indica* - Crepe Myrtle
Height 20 - 30 feet, Spread 10 - 15 feet
This handsome small tree has dull green foliage appearing in the spring, which turns a burnished copper in the fall. Throughout the summer, upright clusters of flowers, (pink, red and white) create a profusion of color. The sculpture-like appearance of the trunk and bark makes the crepe myrtle interesting all year, even in the winter after the leaves are gone. The crepe myrtle is reasonably fast growing, relatively free from disease and is long-lived. This is one of the best all round small trees for eastern North Carolina.

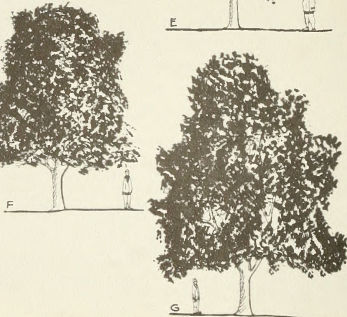


- C. *Prunus caroliniana* - Carolina Cherrylsaur
Height 20 - 30 feet, Spread 15 - 20 feet
This beautiful small tree has the advantage of being an evergreen, or holding its leaves all year round. The lustrous, dark evergreen foliage forms a small symmetrical tree with a heavy round crown. Numerous small white flowers form in the spring and black berry-like fruits develop later. The Cherrylsaur is relatively free of insects and diseases.



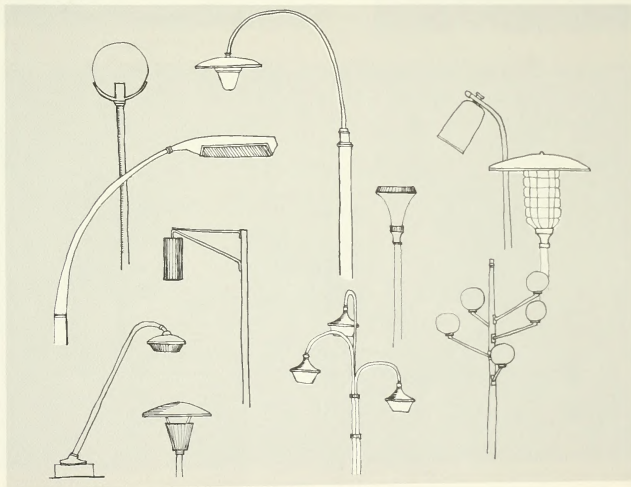
LARGE TREES

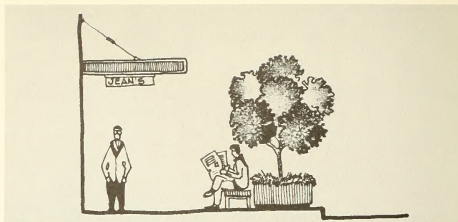
- D. *Acer florinatum* - Southern Sugar Maple
Height 40 - 50 feet, Spread 20 - 30 feet
The Southern Sugar Maple has medium-textured, dark blue-green foliage which turns a brilliant yellow in autumn. Lacy yellow flowers appear in the spring on this long-lived disease free tree. Although it is a slow grower, it is an excellent street tree.
- E. *Ginkgo biloba* - Ginkgo Maidenhair tree
Height 50 - 75 feet, Spread 30 - 40 feet
The spreading and drooping horizontal branches of the Ginkgo have dull, green, leathery foliage which turns to a beautiful yellow in the autumn. The male variety of the Ginkgo is preferred for ornamental plantings due to the ill-smelling green fruits dropped by the females in late summer. The long lived Ginkgo is rather slow growing but survives under almost any conditions.
- F. *Quercus borealis maxima* - Eastern Red Oak
Height 50 - 60 feet, Spread 40 feet
One of the best oaks for city street conditions. It is a clean, handsome, upright tree and forms a large round head. A deeply serrated leaf turns a brilliant red in the fall.
- G. *Platanus acerifolia* - London Plane Tree
Height 50 - 100 feet, Spread 25 - 70 feet
This tree is very similar to the sycamore and is a fine tree for city street plantings. The London Plane Tree is round-headed with wide spreading open branches. The trunk is creamy colored with mottled grey splotches. The large maple like leaves are light green and create a very dense foliage.



STREET
LIGHTS

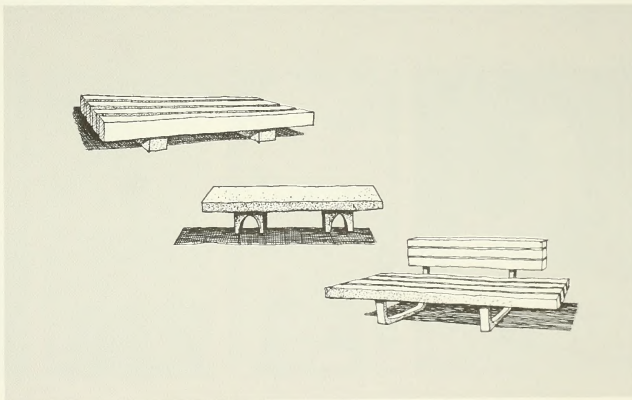
Lighting systems bring not only illumination where there was darkness but cheer and hope where once there was gloom and doom. Lighting is more than illumination, for the appearance of an area is also affected by the design of its lighting structures. The potential for imaginative usage is great in this area through the use of indirect lighting, reasoned construction, and non-conventional placement.

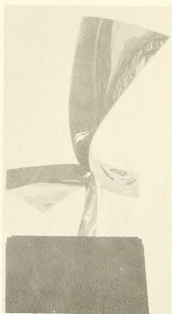
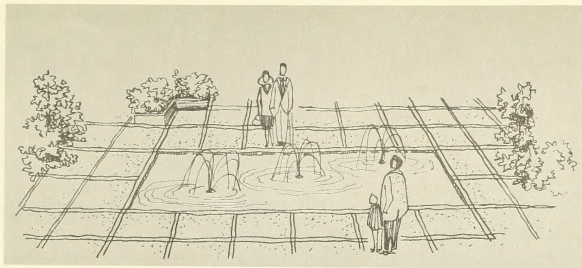




BENCHES

Benches serve as respites for the weary shopper and as vantage points for men at leisure. A successful bench is not an accidental or fortuitous occurrence. It is planned. Location, proper materials, construction, and proportions are essential ingredients of the restful hospitality benches are intended to provide. Benches should be conveniently located in a nodal area where activities occur; in short, where the action is. Further, benches should not interfere with traffic or circulation, should face a visual focal point of some kind, should be made of comfortable material, and should be designed for human proportions.



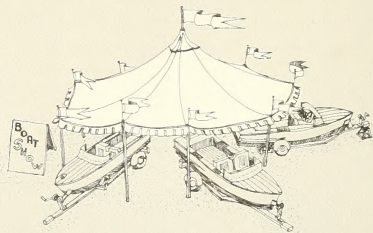
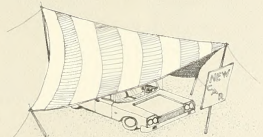
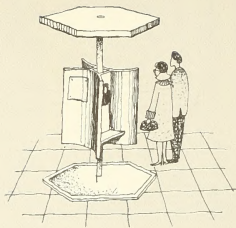
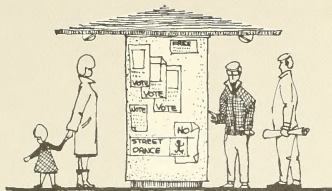


POOL AND FOUNTAINS

Pools and fountains, like trees, afford us refreshing images of nature. Water in the central area provides relief from the rigid buildings, soothes the hard surfaced urban streets, and cools the heated, tired shopper. A fountain can give life to an otherwise dead, open space. The variety of water's possible uses is unlimited and the range of choice is long. The principal decisions must relate to the selection of a proper site, the choice of a fountain or pool design, and the retention of a competent professional willing to provide the decided upon structure at an acceptable cost.

SCULPTURE

Sculpture may seem like a luxurious item in a small town, but in fact it is not. Low cost materials are available which make possible the enjoyment of these human expressions that have served to reflect men's attitudes and actions since earliest times. Like the location of a fountain, a piece of sculpture should be thoughtfully placed in a central location frequented by people whose presence is motivated by a variety of considerations. It should relate in scale to its location and represent an emotion, event, or frame of mind meaningful (and acceptable) to present and future inhabitants of the town. The specific detail and choice of materials should be left to the discretion of the chosen artist.



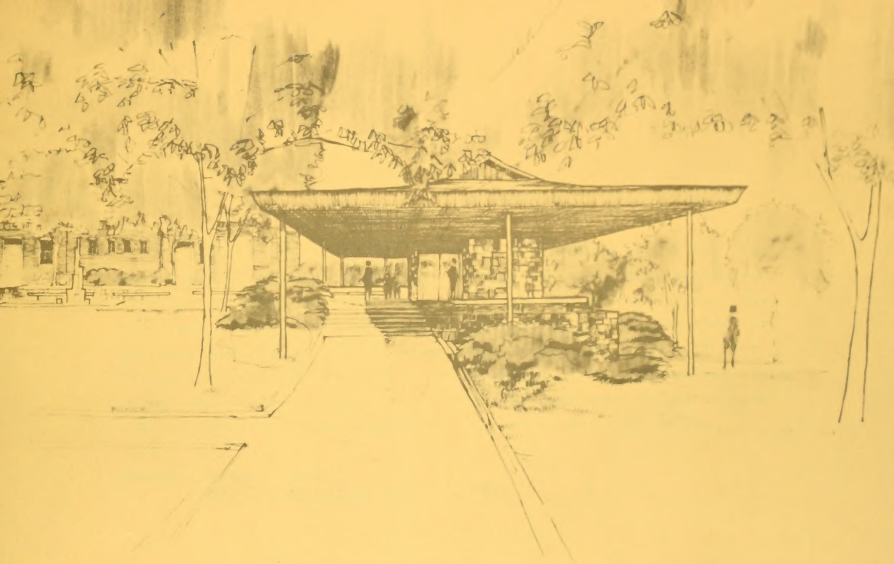
MARKERS OR

BULLETIN BOARDS

Markers or bulletin boards need not be the sterile slabs of cardboard often seen attached to walls. Markers can be of various designs and can positively affect an area's appearance. Popular today among the many types of markers available is the information kiosk. A kiosk may be used as a booth (news or refreshment stand, telephone, or political-rally information center) or may simply be used for the display of posters, local announcements, or coming events. The kiosk can become an important foci in any small business area activity center. In addition to the above noted uses, a kiosk or other formalized marker will discourage the reckless, disheveled clutteration of walls and telephone poles by politicians and/or well-meaning solicitors. Either a shelter, a downtown directory, a tent or a pavilion might also be used in the Apex central area. The intention is not to recommend any of these features but rather to provide the information as to what is available in order that the citizenry and their representatives might make informed choices.

SUMMARY

The design principles and techniques featured here suggest many interesting possibilities for remodeling the Apex central area. Although the range of alternative actions for the business district's improvement is almost limitless, the resources and time of the town's people are not. Therefore, only the best ideas which are compatible with Apex's needs and character are proposed for inclusion in the local program. The recommendations relating to design made in the following section of this report were chosen primarily on the basis of how well they would work in Apex, and not whether they have been used successfully someplace else. In short, all proposals are oriented to what is considered feasible, workable, and best suited to Apex's tradition and style.



THE PLAN

Preface

It is the truth that while men and women do visit the central business district to purchase ships and shoes, and sealing wax, that is not their only, nor even their most compelling motive. They also come downtown in search of wonder and delight; and if these are not supplied, bargain sales alone cannot supply the lack. If part of the street crowds rejoice in statuary and vistas, and another part in saloons and strip-teasers, a successful city must appeal to them all, and monotony, even magnificent monotony, will not do it.

SOURCE: Gerald Johnson
The New Republic, April 3, 1966.



I N T R O D U C T I O N

This is the third major portion of the preliminary downtown development plan for the Town of Apex, North Carolina. The principal purpose of this part of the report is to render an understandable presentation of the future plan for the business area.

As noted earlier, the plan is designed to accomplish three main objectives: (1) improve the appearance of the central business district; (2) increase the amount of parking in this district; and (3) better the district's circulation, or transportation system. The ultimate goal of the planning endeavor is to create a more prosperous business community by establishing a center that is a pleasure to visit. In order to realize this goal, the Apex Planning Board and other interested citizens have created the conceptual approach outlined in the following pages.

To facilitate understanding and convenient reading, the plan itself is divided into six sections, which are as follows:

- (1) guidelines for improved appearance;
- (2) guidelines for improved circulation;
- (3) guidelines for improved parking;
- (4) guidelines for expansion and development;
- (5) guidelines for miscellaneous improvements; and
- (6) guidelines for plan implementation

It is the Board's intention that all interested persons should feel encouraged to assist in the realization of this community quest for beauty and progress. Comments on the plan and all its parts are therefore most sincerely welcomed.



TREES AND/OR SHRUBS



CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

APEX

NORTH CAROLINA

Section One: Guidelines for Improved Appearance

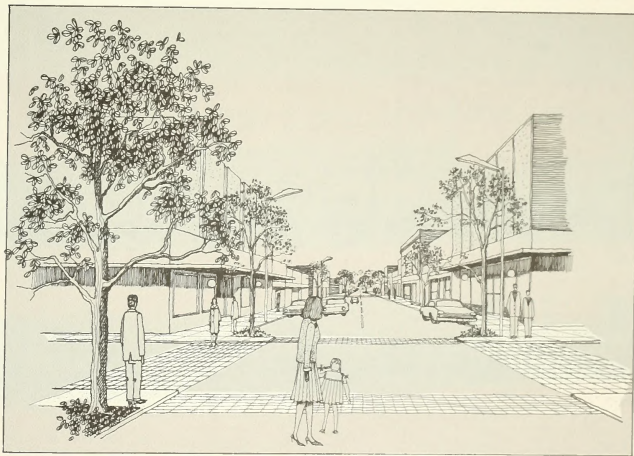
In Part II of this report, it was seen that design features play an enormously important role in shaping the impressions one receives from a business area. The nature and frequency of signs, the condition and texture of pavements, the relationship of store fronts and the color combinations of the entire commercial environment all combine either to delight or confuse the downtown inhabitant. These elements and others relating to street furniture are target number one of the Apex comprehensive central business area planning program.

Design elements and elementary improvement features suggested for the central area are as follows:

1. Tree and/or shrub plantings with standardized containers. These design elements should be spaced along Salem Street between Chatham and Center Streets. To do so would give each side of Salem Street shading and attraction, and thus the entire area would derive benefit from these green features. Unless preparation is made for continuing plant husbandry, it is recommended that trees, rather than plants, be employed in the central area. If spaced with care and consideration to each other and the surroundings, the effect of trees should be especially pleasing and inviting.



2. Sidewalk modifications for textural effect. Use of asphalt, concrete and paving brick in an unconventional manner will contribute enormously to the creation of a memorable and alluring central area. Different functions could be suggested by changing patterns; various textures could help the shopper anticipate changed situations (such as street corner or open space).



3. A coordinated store-front color scheme and voluntary sign control program. Store front improvements, if undertaken with a planned awareness of the relationship between one property and the next, and each property on the effect of the whole downtown complex, could convert the neutral personality of the Apex business area to a positive character of color and pleasantry. Paint is inexpensive and easy to apply well.

The merchants should be encouraged to agree upon sign sizes, lettering types and kinds of objects on which signs could be placed.



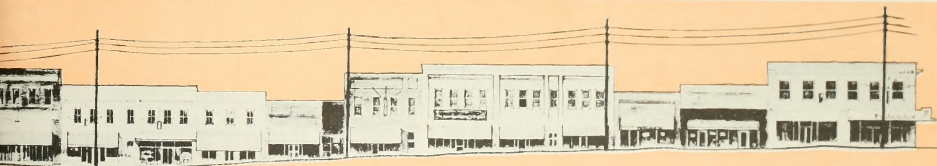
existing west elevation - salem street



proposed west elevation - salem street

This action will enhance the final image and style of the store fronts and lend to them an air of sophistication and charm.

Merchants should band together and settle upon a set of hues and shades, perhaps of five or six specific types. As soon as these color and sign agreement issues are resolved (possibly by voting among a special committee of merchants appointed for this purpose), then the job should begin. Supervision should be by the merchants own Downtown Improvement Association.

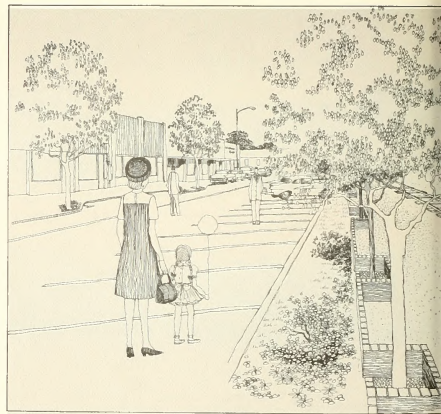
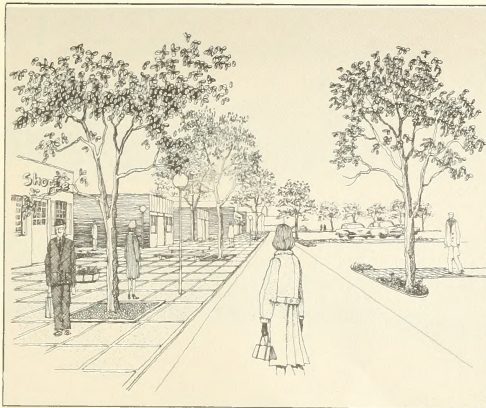


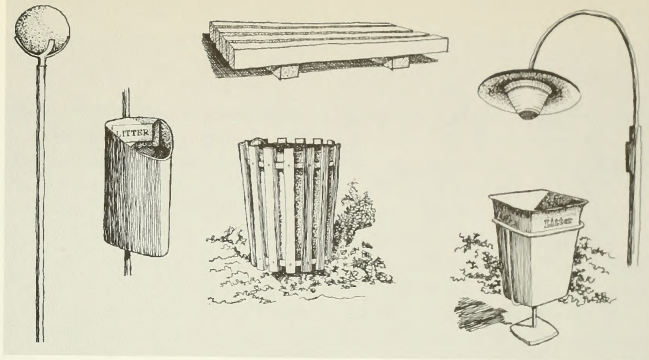
East elevation - adams street



East elevation - adams street

4. Restoration of rear lots and development into entrance ways.
The refurbishment of the presently dilapidated back lots behind Salem Street between Chatham and Saunders Streets is a crucial concomitant of the circulation and parking sub-sections of this plan. This relationship will be described in the succeeding pages; here it is sufficient to note that the rear lots behind Salem Street are expected to become an intimate part of the Apex business community. In most instances, structures will have to be modified, repaired and painted; the cost involved in so doing will be a sound investment in a profitable and active future. The business area will thus become more accessible and convenient and a hub of regional consumer activity.

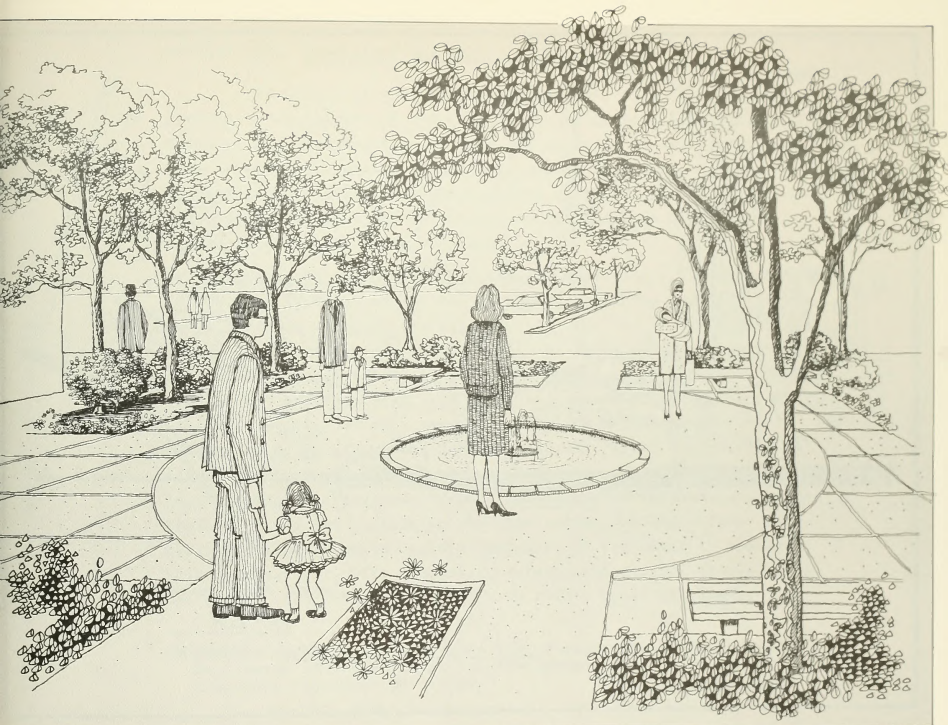


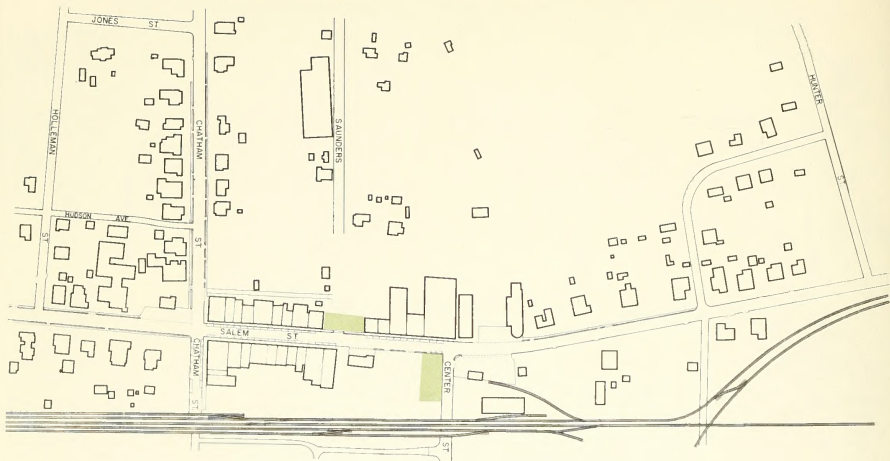


5. Attention to and redesign of selected elements of street furniture. Waste receptacles, traffic control devices and utility poles and lights should either be "rejuvenated" or replaced with more decorous street furniture to accord with the "new" central area. Repairing, sanding, repainting, and remodeling can accomplish the "rejuvenation"; careful choice and strategic placement are in order when existing street furniture is to be replaced. New elements that will facilitate Apex's downtown renaissance, such as benches, sculptures, a fountain and a kiosk¹ or two should be designed with the newly created "town style" in mind. Again, the Downtown Improvement Association should assist in such selections.

¹ A kiosk is a small light structure with one or more open sides, and is popularly used as a bulletin board or information center in the newer European shopping centers.

6. A small activity center-park complex. On the western side of Salem Street, the gap from building to building where Saunders Street enters Salem Street is approximately 125 feet long. This is an excellent location for an activity center-park complex. Another, even better location would be the auto parking lot site at the corner of Salem and Center Streets. The Apex business area needs such a leisure island amid the swirling turbulence of shopper activity. Either of the proposed locations would be ideal for the placement of the previously noted design elements, such as benches, kiosk, sculptures and fountain. Displays could be featured at this park area, and rallies, speeches, outdoor dances and such could also be conducted at such a place. The various relationships that the park-center might have to the proposed circulation pattern are explained in the following pages. A vital point to be considered, regardless of exactly where in the central business area it is located, is that possibly a considerable share of the costs would be borne by the federal government if the area is to be used as a public open space. Under the 1965 Housing Act, urban land may be acquired, cleared and beautified with the government providing up to 50% project cost assistance! This represents an outstanding opportunity that Apex merchants ought not to ignore. The central business area needs such a development as this, and every effort should be expended to achieve it.





CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

APEX

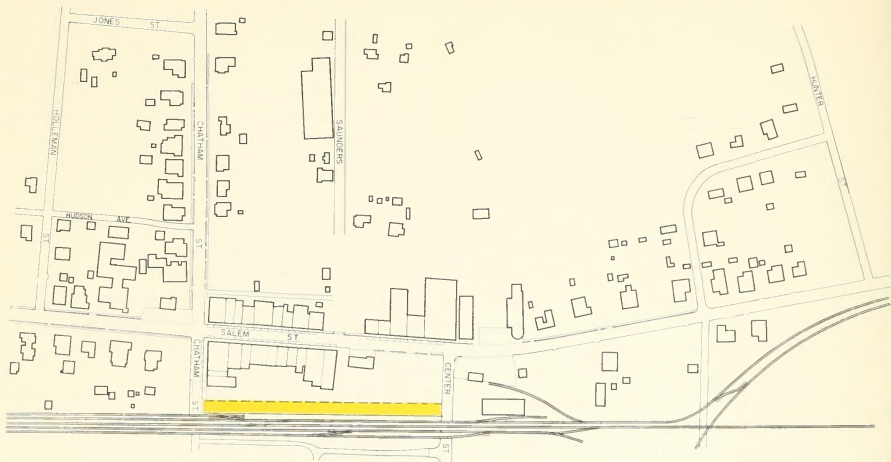
NORTH CAROLINA

Section Two: Guidelines for Improved Circulation

In Part I of this report, it was seen that Apex has many problems with respect to the circulation of traffic in the business district. It was pointed out that the movement of vehicles in the area is crowded, unsafe, restrictive and inefficient. Using as a general guide the Proposed Thoroughfare Plan for Apex², the following specific suggestions pertaining to the downtown area are intended to alleviate these problems.

1. Extension of Hudson Avenue northward beginning at Chatham Street to a tie-in at Grove Street and southward beginning at Moore Street for a distance of approximately one mile to a tie-in at Salem Street at the Apex southern corporate limit. As noted in the Thoroughfare Plan, this improvement would provide a system of loop streets around the central business area, and would be a first phase in the town's planned extension of this roadway. It would become possible for persons to drive around the business center, rather than having to make a "U" turn and go back through Salem Street or find a circuitous route through a residential area. It would thus relieve much of the traffic burden now resting on the lone carrier, Salem Street. Considerable acquisition of land is going to be necessary to implement this proposal but, with federal assistance and logical necessity on the town's side, this ought not to be a very great obstacle.

² See the "Apex Land Development Plan," published by the State Department of Conservation and Development's Division of Community Planning, pp. 31-32.



CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

APEX

NORTH CAROLINA

2. Construction of a small roadway to run parallel and adjacent to the Seaboard Air Line Railroad (see sketch number three). This will complement the rear lot development of stores situated on the east side of Salem Street and will make accessible the parking area planned at this location.

Again, public acquisition, possibly under the power of eminent domain, is likely to be necessary. In addition, a buffer wall or other retaining feature will have to be run along the roadside nearest the tracks for obvious reasons. Development of this kind will have a profound effect on the character and retail potential of the business community. It will remove from the area many of the most blighted, non-retail related structures while at the same time permitting expansion of commercial usage.

3. Closing of Saunders Street at its Salem Street connection, a distance of at least 100 feet. This proposal is closely related to a previous one having to do with the development of an activity center-park complex at this crucial location, and is recommended even if the complex is not located at this site. Saunders Street is not an important part of the town's movement system. It is unpaved and dead-ends at Salem Street, thereby accomplishing nothing for the motorist that could not more conveniently be achieved by travel on Chatham Street (which, incidentally, does continue beyond Salem Street to the eastern section of town).

Section Three: Guidelines for Increased Parking

The previously commented upon analysis of parking showed that Apex is in need of approximately 200 additional parking spaces. In order to meet the challenge of the super-retail centers in the surrounding region, the Apex downtown must not only be attractive and easy to reach but must also be made convenient for motorists after they arrive. Good roads and traffic circulation are one-half of this latter requirement; plentiful parking is the other.

The map below shows how parking would be handled in the "new" central Apex. Details would be worked out with the consulting architect; the general scheme shown below indicates the major off-street parking areas.



CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

APEX

NORTH CAROLINA

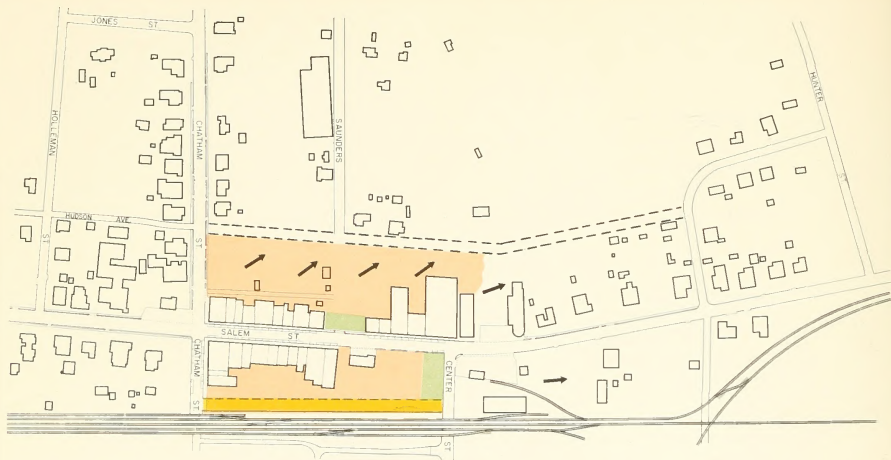
This sketch indicates parking space for at least the desired number of 200 additional cars. This provision will give the shopper almost total assurance that this convenience has been considered and attended to by the merchants of Apex. All of the proposed parking is within 400 feet or one block of the principal business establishments. It can be seen that this parking plan has been closely coordinated with the proposed thoroughfare improvements for the business area.

No distinction is made between employee and consumer parking. The plentiful amount of available parking under the proposed plan would seem to make such a delineation unnecessary.

Certain development standards should be adhered to in constructing the recommended facilities, including:

1. The grading and paving of all such parking areas;
2. The clear marking of entrances and exits with imaginative signs (of a type compatible with the new character or "image" of the central area);
3. The arrangement of the spaces themselves in such a way that maximum storage of vehicles is obtained while always insuring that a parked motorist can move his vehicle into the traffic pattern without delay; and
4. The suitable landscaping of proposed lots with shade giving trees, buffers and other appropriate design elements.

The presence of adequate parking facilities in the commercial area will do much to permit and encourage additional retailing in Apex as the years go by. Of course, ample parking arrangements will also indirectly increase the amount of trade at present retail sites.



SUGGESTED DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE EXPANSION



CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

APEX

NORTH CAROLINA



Section Four: Guidelines for Expansion and Development

Possibly the most crucial aspect of planning tomorrow's Apex business community is in determining the directions of its future growth. On the basis of the Planning Board's earlier studies, the nature of present development and certain principal land determinants (i.e., the railroad lines), the best directions of future expansion and development are clearly north and west. Northern development should occur on both sides of Salem Street starting at Center Street; western development should proceed from Salem Street out to, but not beyond, the proposed Hudson Avenue extension. If the business community is guided in this manner, both residential amenities and transportation efficiencies will be encouraged. Under no circumstances should commercial scatteration be permitted east or south of the present business district. Eastern expansion would reduce the convenience of rear and front-shopping, destroy the district's centrality and multiply the danger and blight of the railroad right-of-way; southern expansion would violate the calm serenity and rustic charm of the low-keyed residential-church-office complex that now serves as a buffer zone to the business area.

Section Five: Guidelines for Miscellaneous Improvements

Many actions of importance to the workability of the "new" Apex cannot conveniently be grouped into categories, but are of no less consequence because of this fact. The most important of these actions, which will be discussed in the following pages, are:

(1) removal of the water tower from its present site; (2) acquisition and demolition of certain structures impeding the implementation of the improvement program and the lands on which they are sited; (3) acquisition of the remaining two tracts of moment to the plan, specifically the vacant land at Saunders and Salem Streets (proposed for park-recreation development) and/or the used car lot at the southern corner of Center Street and Salem Street; (4) eventual underground placement of utility wires; and (5) removal of the loading tracks on the railroad behind Salem Street east.

Each of these proposals will be discussed in more detail. It is important to remember, however, that what is proposed in this report and by the town officials is not a blueprint for immediate action nor an architectural rendering for imminent design. Rather, it is a plan for a future form, a physical goal for the business community and an outline of what could be. This plan can encourage, it can suggest and it can lead but it will fail if not sought after and desired.

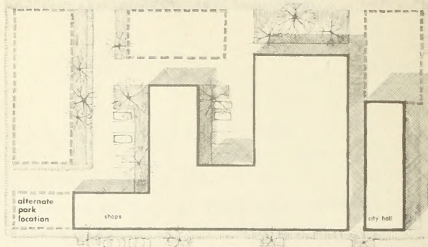
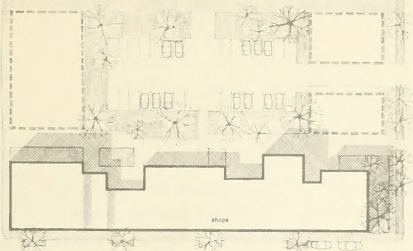
This plan can be modified. Its parts can, within limitations, be rearranged. The timing of project sequences can be altered. But it cannot be "shelved" if it is to happen. Each citizen will contribute to the future central business district, for however Apex

develops in the years to come will reflect the efforts or lack of efforts of her people to build the community according to plan. It would indeed be a pity if Apex, like Herber's Palestine, should "fail the bright promise of its early days."

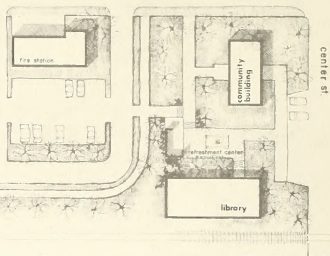
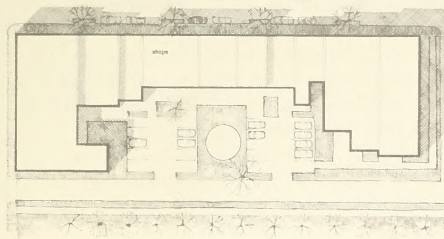
Section Six: Guidelines for Plan Implementation

Following the spirit of this plan with action in the years to come must be an organized, methodical process. The priority schedule offered in the succeeding pages should be considered a general guide and reference for the timing of improvement measures. A schedule for the alleviation of downtown problems and for the beautification of the business community should, like a capital budget and public improvements program, be viewed as a flexible commitment to be altered or changed for good cause only. A sequence for ordering the proposed improvements is now in order. Rather than use dates or a rigid numerical arrangement, the implementation plan calls for work to be undertaken in a generalized, three staged sequence. One sequence will begin after the other is fully conducted, the result being that all essential improvement elements should be accomplished at the termination of the final stage.

chatham st.



saalem st.



Stage One

A. Creation of Downtown Improvement Association

The Apex Chamber of Commerce and planning board have already moved on this proposal by creating an association composed of merchants and downtown property owners to assist in carrying out the plan.

This was a necessary action that had to precede other enterprises related to business district improvements. The organization will serve as a composite of different interests united in the objective of a better community. It will be necessary for the "Improvement Association" to work closely with the merchants, the Chamber of Commerce, the Town Planning Board and any individual citizen interested in the program. It will be the Association's assigned task to make the specific decisions affecting the central area. The Association is representative and it has general community support. Future staffing and leadership of this committee will be the single most crucial aspect of the program. The imagination and organizational ability requisite to the Association's role make this endeavor worthy of Apex's finest.

B. Plant Trees and/or Shrubbery

Suggested tree types and/or plant designs have been indicated as desirable features for the business area. The selection of specific types of trees and plants should be one of the earliest considerations for the newly created "Downtown Improvement Association" to weigh. Early action on tree plantings and/or shrub placements in the central area will initiate and make evident the fact that the planning program has begun.

C. Effect Sidewalk Modification

Textural effects will, like trees or plants, give the area a changed character and suggest to all that things are happening. Here, the costs should be only slightly more than the town would otherwise have had to meet for the purpose of standard repairs and replacements. The effect, when combined with the tree or shrub plantings, should be encouraging to the program's supporters and convincing to its doubters.

D. Initiate Acquisition Program

For short, intermediate and long-range improvements, much private land is going to be needed. Various governmental aids and inducements are available for this purpose. The town, through its Downtown Improvement Association, should begin negotiations with firms and individuals holding properties indicated as being relevant to the planning program. Early acquisition will enable the town to acquire desired properties at more reasonable prices than would be possible if action were delayed until the hour of actual need arrived. In addition, the sometimes lengthy process of condemnation proceedings would be less of an encumbrance at a later date if begun well in advance.

E. Redesign Selected Elements of Street Furniture

As the appearance of the area begins to change and forgotten features are discovered anew, there will be a need for further attention to general street appearance.

Selection and purchase of unusual benches, receptacles, directional signs, and the repainting of hydrants and street markings will, if coordinated with other physical features, appreciably enhance the changing style of the central area. The particular results, of

course, will depend upon the final choices made by the Improvement Association.

F. Coordinated Store-Front Color Scheme

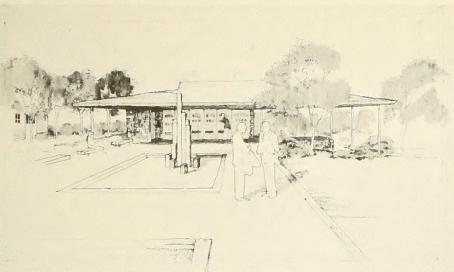
The severest test of the Downtown Improvement Association's mettle will very likely occur when the merchants are brought together to agree upon and then enforce a coordinated store-front color scheme. Full participation is vital and meaningful enforcement is imperative. The Association's leaders will require a Machiavellian talent for diplomacy, a Jeffersonian love of democracy and a Lyonesque skill of persuasion.

A more propitious stage in the improvement program for this intention would be hard to find. Things will have begun to happen, the costs to date against the merchants and town will have been reasonable, the community will be favorably aroused and the Association will have momentum. Success here could give psychological impetus to the more ambitious and involved second and third stages of the program.

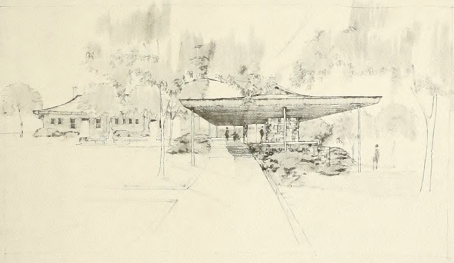
G. Sign Control

The deleterious influence upon the appearance of the Apex central area that is rendered by the motley signs therein will not be mitigated by the suggested changes noted above. On the contrary, the adverse effects of the poor signs will increase. They will, in short, become even more distasteful and obscene.

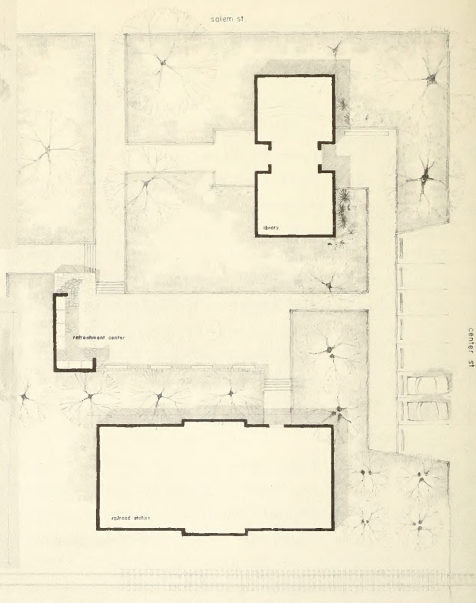
Signs could be controlled by the Downtown Improvement Association in much the same manner as the store-front painting scheme. The merchants ought to be consulted, brought into some basic agreements on self-regulation and then encouraged to work for a sign control program.



refreshment center from Lester street



refreshment center from Union street



Stage Two

A. Rear-Lot Development of Salem Street Business Establishments

As suggested by the sketches, this is a principal feature of the improvement plan. It is also one of the most ambitious. It will require more than individual merchant initiative. It will require public effort and expenditure as well.

Rear-lot development is placed in the second stage not because it is of secondary importance but rather because it needs the momentum of previous success. Before the Downtown Improvement Association could hope to achieve the necessary coordination and good-will required for this project, the scent of proven accomplishment must linger in the air. If stage one has been accomplished, then rear-lot development should be undertaken.

The town will have to acquire properties and develop them in a manner suitable for parking. Landscaping and other such costs attendant upon rear-lot beautification will be borne by private enterprises. Private citizens without vested interests will be encouraged to participate through their suggestions and moral support.

B. Park-Complex and Activity Center

A major aspect of the improvement program, it is suggested that the park-activity area be considered as the focal point of Apex's new downtown. If developed with the tired pedestrian in mind, it will be a boon to business; if the town visitors are of prime concern, there will soon be more of them. Either way, "Apexians" will profit economically and socially from such a business-community attraction.

This part of the plan should be closely correlated with the proposed Hudson Avenue extension if the park is to be sited at the Salem Street location. Federal funds will supplement local resources in accomplishing these activities. This combination makes both the park development and street extension at least as feasible as the other, lower cost proposals already noted.

C. Extension of Hudson Avenue

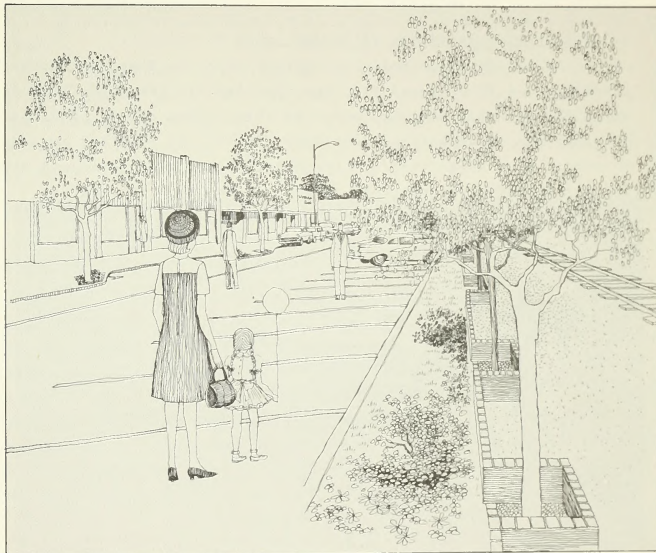
Necessary to improve the efficiency of circulation in the downtown area, the proposed extension would allow vehicles to travel around the business district. It would also provide an effective channel into the suggested parking area and would structure future business growth in the most efficient directions, namely north and west of Chatham and Salem Streets.

If progress has been made according to schedule, then the necessary lands should by this time have been acquired and construction should proceed. If not, then increased attention should be given to this end. Plentiful parking, freedom of access and rear-store development all depend upon an extended Hudson Avenue. In this sense, so too does the integrity and completeness of the plan.

D. Construction of Roadway adjacent to the Railroad East of Salem Street.

As important to the rear-lot development of the eastern side of Salem Street as is Hudson Street to its western side, this roadway will provide further entrances and egress into the Apex business area. It will also feed into the parking spaces to be located behind the stores, as well as clearly define the outer limits of the

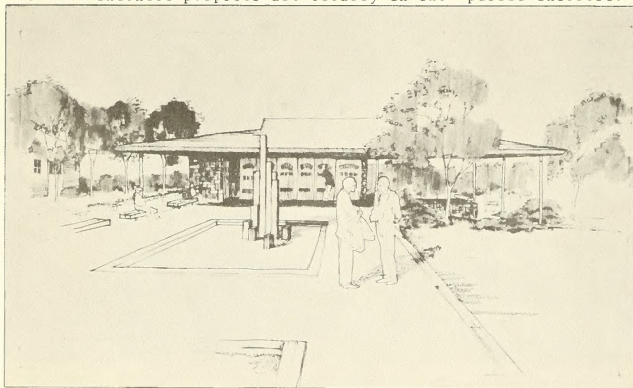
district's eastern edge. Here, too, land ought to have been acquired in advance of actual development. The land needed for this effort is presently occupied by ramshackle coal bins, decaying warehouses and a marginal water tank. The first two obstacles should simply be cleared after the properties are acquired; the latter presents more of a problem and will be discussed separately in the final stage.



One important factor to which the Improvement Association will have to attend is the matter of a barrier between the proposed roadway and the railroad tracks. The form which this barrier will take must be an issue for the Association to decide; its presence as a safety and as an aesthetic device cannot be compromised.

E. Continued Acquisition of Needed Lands

It is not reasonable to suppose that the Downtown Improvement Association will successfully have acquired all the lands indicated as needed for plan implementation by this middle stage. This is to be expected; nevertheless, continued efforts and negotiation should be made. As a final resort, condemnation proceedings are in order, for the intended purposes are clearly in the "public interest."



Stage Three

A. Removal of Water-tower

The Town Engineer points out that the principal value of the huge water-tower is that it stabilizes the water pressure in the business area. He further points out that this same function could just as easily be accomplished by a smaller tank on the outskirts of town.

This tower should not be tolerated "because it is there." It can and should be removed, relocated or permanently dismantled. The costs of so doing will be quickly regained from the acquired utility of the central space behind Salem Street that is currently earmarked for rear lot development.

B. Acquisition of Remaining Land Parcels

This is self-explanatory and its importance to the whole plan concept is well understood.

C. Underground Placement of Utility Wires

The last major feature of the improvement program requires that town officials and Association leaders work closely with representatives of Southern Bell Telephone Company. Underground placement of utility and town controlled electric wires will greatly reduce the visible clutter in the central area. If a cost sharing proposition acceptable to both public and private interests cannot be found, then the costs involved in burying the wires and removing utility poles would probably be too great.

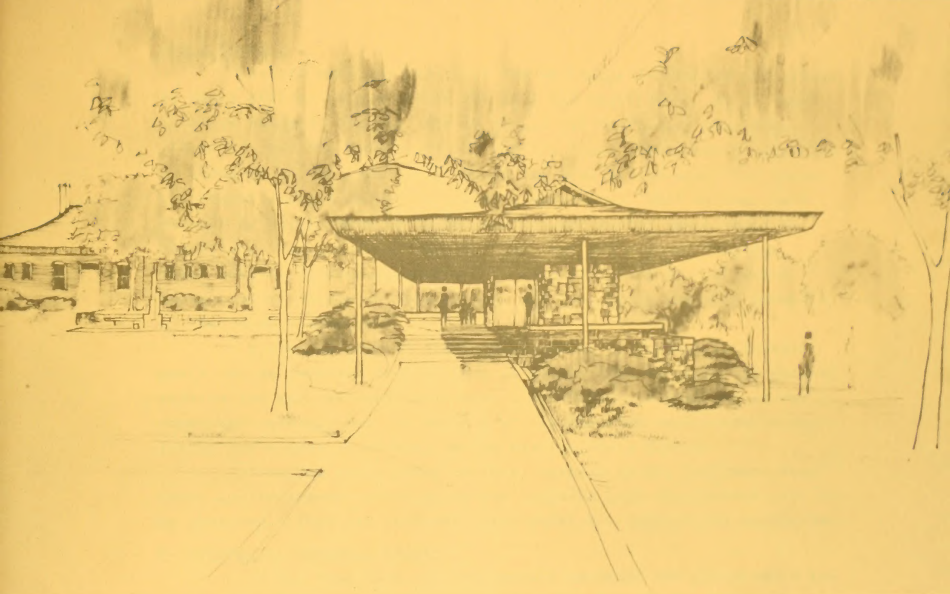
D. Removal of Railroad Loading Tracks

Consultations with railroad officials indicate that this could be effected at an early date. Only one main line would remain in the area, and most of the objectionable features associated with the railroads operation would be removed.

Concluding Note

It is not expected that these proposals will be swiftly put into action. This is not the intention of the preceeding three-stage listing. What is expected is that the town officials and the appointed top-quality men and women on the Downtown Improvement Association will be truly concerned with achieving a plan in the best interests of Apex. It is also expected that other active citizens will encourage and assist these responsible officials in effectuating the objectives and goals of the downtown improvement program.

The task ahead will be difficult and fraught with disappointments. But ultimate success, which can come from civic efforts and merchant participation, need not be unattainable or far away. After all, the plan exists. Its action Apex needs now.



EFFECTUATION

Legal Aspects

Untold problems will face the merchants and public officials in their efforts to accomplish the proposed objectives. Is it legal to close Saunders Street? Who is to pay for the trees, plantings, sidewalks, parking facilities and all the other improvements suggested as elements in the plan? How should the town fairly apportion these betterment charges among the affected merchants? This section will attempt to answer some of these queries and clarify their legal implications. It will be shown that case law and statute language allow several different approaches. Apex officials should choose among them to determine what actions and procedures are most amenable to the local situation.¹

A general idea of the town's ability to accomplish certain goals can be inferred from a study of Apex's Town Charter, the general statute law and the applicable case law. These are proposed as recommended readings for the members of the Downtown Improvement Association and others interested in the Association's labors.

From the above noted sources, certain rather pertinent legal facts and inferences relating to the proposed Apex improvement plan can be observed. They are reviewed below under the appropriate categories.

A. Closing of Saunders Street

It has been held that the public interest and convenience are the prime considerations for legality when a municipality wishes to vacate a street. Furthermore, it has been established that this power to vacate includes the power to vacate a portion thereof . . .

¹ The materials in this section are adapted from the Division of Community Planning's booklet entitled: Legal Consideration in Central Business District Planning and Development by Steve Blackwell, 1965.

Thus Apex officials would appear to be standing on firm ground in seeking the closing of Saunders Street at Salem Street for the purpose of converting the present open area at this location into a park-like setting of beauty and convenience.

B. Sidewalk Beautification for Textural Effects

Many cases that hinge on the municipality's powers with respect to the control and use of public streets are relevant to what Apex might attempt to do with its sidewalks. In a 1915 case in Winston-Salem, it was held that it was within the city's discretion to determine where and how the streets and sidewalks should be improved . . . As noted in the Blackwell report, it would seem that the best method of establishing a mall (or other similar improvement, such as new pavement types, park area, etc.) would be to limit the use of the street to pedestrians, as proposed in Apex (for Saunders Street).

C. The Use of Eminent Domain for Obtaining the Proposed Acquisitions

Numerous acquisitions of private properties are suggested in the preliminary plan. It is not likely that all the owners of affected properties will be persuaded to accept the town's judgement as to what constitutes fair market value. In such cases, condemnation proceedings under the laws of Eminent Domain are recommended. To what extent can Apex exercise this power?

So long as the owners of the desired properties are accorded just compensation for their holding, there are no quantitative restrictions on the amount of public acquisitions under such proceedings.

The right of Eminent Domain is one of the oldest basic rights inherent in sovereignty. A municipal corporation (Apex) has as much sovereign power under this title as has been delegated to it by its charter or by general statute. The General Assembly has set forth a definite procedure to be followed by municipalities seeking to exercise this important prerogative. Apex officials should become acquainted with proper procedure and follow it as necessary.

D. Underground Placement of Utility Wires

Recommended as a long range goal is the relocation of telephone wires beneath the surface. Subsequent to this will be the removal of telephone poles. Both actions are intended to remedy the clutter or maze-like quality of the central area. Can the town require the public utility company to so relocate its lines and equipment? Must the town pay the expense of such relocation? Blackwell quotes Rhyne's Municipal Law to argue that a municipality is not required to compensate a utility company for relocations caused by municipal improvements. He goes on to note that "North Carolina seems to follow the general rule in this respect that cities may lawfully require utility companies to relocate." This fact vastly increases the chances for success in effectuating this proposal.

E. Sign Control in the Central Area

Much to the benefit of those who care about the town's appearance and the character of its downtown is the fact that Apex does have the necessary power to regulate advertisements in the central business district. North Carolina General Statutes give all municipal corporations (which Apex has been since 1872) the power to control and direct the erection of fences, billboards, signs, and so forth.

One case in which a town's discretionary power was tested resulted in a court judgement to the effect that a local government could control signs "so as to secure uniformity, convenience . . . proportion and sightliness and other necessary things incident to the growth and development of modern municipalities." This rather liberal interpretation of the traditional requirement that advertising control regulations bear a substantial relation to the maintenance of the health, morals, safety and welfare of the community is a sanguine occurrence for Apex downtown "improvers." So, too, is a later expression of this same tendency, quoted by Blackwell from a New Bern case.

... the scope of city government is not restricted to its primitive uses of the protection of life and limb and for the accommodation of business, but can embrace the preservation of the attractions as a place of residence, and further that the city government is to be viewed as an instrumentality for the abolition of unsightly places and sounds.

In 1964, the Supreme Court of North Carolina upheld a zoning ordinance that restricted advertising signs in a central business district. The court held that "the legislative intent was to establish a first-class business and commercial district . . . and that it was permissible for the city council . . . to limit advertising signs within the district to those defined in the ordinance as business signs."

Thus, it seems well established that Apex does have the requisite authority to control the size, placement and design of signs in the central business area, as proposed in the report.

Financing the Downtown Improvement Program

Numerous local, state and federal devices and programs are available to the officials in Apex who will assume responsibility for the Improvement Plan. How to pay for the desired improvements is a complex issue that must be faced by responsible persons sincere about the betterment program. Prior to explaining the nature of available aids, attention will be given to the limitations that North Carolina law places upon the use of public funds and the financial capability of Apex to incur indebtedness.

A. Limitations on the Use of Public Funds

(1) and (2) Two well established constitutional limitations exist upon a municipality's power to tax and incur debts. One is that such contraction may only be made for necessary expenses.²

An exception to the "necessary expense" doctrine occurs when the proposed expense is favorably voted upon in a special election held for this purpose. The difficulty of this doctrine is that it is often hard to define the particulars as to what constitutes a "necessary expense." Court definitions are deliberately nebulous; the list of permitted "necessary expenses" is long and confusing. In short, the concept is a changing one, and what was "necessary" yesterday may or may not be "necessary" tomorrow. The best rule for Apex to follow in a case of "doubtful necessity" would be to obviate the risk of a successful challenge by putting the matter before the

² This section also borrows heavily from the legal discussions contained in Steve Blackwell's Legal Considerations in C.B.D. Planning and Development, Division of Community Planning, 1965.

people for a vote. The spirit of the plan cannot be sought and achieved without the people. Therefore, it would only be logical to solicit their good-will and backing from the very beginning through the ballot.

The "public purpose" doctrine is also subject to varying interpretations and it too is a changing concept. Generally, however, "public purposes" are considered served when the funds are directed for the "support of government or for any of the recognized objectives of government." Again, the safest and most politic action the Apex officials could take would be to place the specific improvement issue before the people for a vote.

(3) A third limitation on Apex's financing ability is the matter of "debt limitation." The General Assembly has ordained that no municipality shall contract debts, during any fiscal year, to an amount exceeding two-thirds of the amount by which the outstanding indebtedness of the municipality shall have been reduced during the next preceeding fiscal year. Again, a vote of the people can negate this requirement. Another limitation on Apex's ability to raise monies for the improvement program is the Assembly's dictate that municipalities must not issue bonds unless it appears that the net debt of the town will not exceed eight percent of the assessed valuation of taxable property. The variety of sources from which central business improvement area funds can be obtained make it unlikely that the latter limitation will prove much of a problem to Apex officials.

(4) For the obvious reason that general improvements in the downtown area alter regional buying patterns to the marked advantage of affected business establishments, most American cities have found it equitable to transfer the costs thereof to the downtown property owners. This process is known as "special assessment" and has been used before in Apex (i.e., utility improvements).

General Statutes in North Carolina grant municipal bodies rather broad powers to assess properties for general improvements. Two sections of the State law that appear relevant to Apex's central business program are:

(1) N.C.G.S. 160-178 to 160-105 which authorize the levy of special assessments to finance street and sidewalk improvements; and

(2) N.C.G.S. 160-497 to 160-507 which authorize the levy of special assessments to finance parking facilities.

Apex merchants and public officials will both gain in different ways from the use of assessment procedures. The former will obtain property enhancements they would probably not have been able to afford individually; the latter will achieve for their town an enrichment for all the public to enjoy. Owing to the variety of other aids that are available, special assessments need only be made for sidewalk texturing, plantings, rear-lot landscaping and a portion of the parking development costs.

(3) It is possible that the available amount of funds from special assessments, general tax revenues, federal grants and other sources will not give Apex sufficient resources fully to complete its downtown improvement program. In such an instance the town may choose to rely upon its borrowing power.

Two types of bonds of most interest to the Program are general obligation and special tax bonds. The former bonds are secured by the town's pledge of full faith, credit and taxing power for the payment of the bond and are payable from any and all available town revenue; the latter are payable through assessments levied on property directly affected by the improvements. Of course, all of the previously noted limitations on municipal indebtedness apply to the town's ability to issue bonds.

(4) There are a variety of "general" and "special" sources from which a municipality may draw additional fiscal strength in order to finance its central area improvements. Blackwell lists these as general property taxes, licenses, fines, permits, fees, Powell Bill funds, service charges and incomes from public service enterprises such as electricity and gas. Though previously lumped together under the nomenclature of "general revenues," it is instructive to note that any one of these fund sources could be employed in a disjunctive sense if the town fathers so deigned. Unfortunately, most of these resources are practically inapplicable in a direct sense for business district improvements of the type proposed for Apex. Though not specifically related to the Apex downtown improvement program, the \$53,600 in road bond funds allotted to Apex by the Highway Department should be coordinated, at least in part, with the proposed Salem Street betterment project.

(5) Merchant incentive would be damaged and beautification efforts would lag if North Carolina towns penalized property betterments with increased tax valuations. Members of the Downtown Improvement Association should be quick to point out that public policy in Apex is or will be designed to prevent this from happening. The town will have State support in this endeavor, for it is written in

the General Statutes that:

. . . all tax assessors are hereby instructed that in accessing real estate under the provisions of G. S. 105-279 they shall make no increase in the tax valuation of real estate as a result of the owners' enterprise in adopting (certain) progressive policies. . .

It is only consistent with this statute to expect that businessmen who improve their properties will receive favorable tax considerations. Their efforts in so doing will be in their own best interests but will also contribute to the public good.

Capacity of Apex to Incur Indebtedness

The Town of Apex is in a good position at the present time to begin an active downtown improvement program. It has more funds available than current expenditures demand, and is now operating with a comfortable surplus. The 1964-65 figures for revenues and expenditures give an indication of this financial good health:

Revenue	\$409,831.61
Expenditures	\$387,769.85
	<u>+\$ 22,061.76</u>

These figures include the \$160,396.16 Apex derived from the sale of water bonds (revenue) and the \$150,096.86 spent for water system improvements (expenditures). A year earlier, in 1963, Apex officials "closed the books" with a net of over \$21,000.

In addition to this indicator of the town's ability to carry improvements, it is possible to examine Apex's comparative statement of assets and liabilities over the same time period. This analysis also gives a favorable impression of Apex's financial situation.

Assets	\$1,298,421.72
Liabilities	\$ 544,957.80
Surplus	<u>+\$ 753,463.92</u>

Bonded indebtedness as of June 30, 1965 was \$477,000. Pursuant to North Carolina law, a municipality shall not incur a bonded indebtedness in an amount exceeding eight percent (8%) of the assessed taxable property within the town limits. Property in Apex is currently estimated at \$3,845,637 (1964 figure). Eight percent of this figure yields a maximum allowable bonded indebtedness figure of \$307,650.96, meaning that Apex is \$169,350 overextended in this respect. However, the town can finance some of the needed improvements because the above quoted indebtedness includes revenue anticipation bonds (enterprises that are exempted from the debt limitations). Under present financial conditions, Apex is far short of reaching the statutory limit in issuing municipal bonds.³

The tax rate in Apex is \$1.35 per \$100.00 of assessed valuation, which in turn is considered as approximately 50% of true value (market price). The right to raise or lower this tax ratio is held by the county governing board.

Apex's revenue is going to increase above the current and past levels. The approved budget for 1965 is \$297,769.87, a generous increase over previous years (the 1964 budget was \$256,869.00; the 1963 budget was \$202,375.00). Add to this trend the fact that additional revenue can be realized through a variety of fiscal maneuvers and adjustments and the conclusion that Apex can afford its needed improvement plan becomes inescapable.

3

No new bonds are currently authorized.

Federal Aids for Implementating the Improvement Program

In addition to the Urban Planning Assistance Program which provides the town with professional planning aid on a two-thirds cost sharing basis, two other Federal Acts bear on the Apex business district improvement effort. One is Title IX of the recently passed Housing Act of 1965 known as Urban Beautification and Improvement; the other is the well established Urban Renewal Program. Each of these programs will be discussed in turn, with special reference being made to application in Apex.

A. Grants for Urban Beautification and Improvement

The Congress of the United States created this section in the Housing Act because it recognized the same conditions and problems throughout the country that are so apparent in Apex. The preamble to the Act sums up very well the program's intention:⁴

The Congress finds that a combination of... forces have caused a rapid expansion of the Nation's urban areas, which in turn has created critical problems of service and finance for all levels of government... threatening severe problems...

The Congress further finds that there is an urgent need for the additional provision of parks and other open-space areas in the developed portions of the Nation's urban areas and for greater and better coordinated local efforts to beautify and improve open space.

Under section 706 of this Act, the federal government agrees to help local governments acquire open spaces to develop them into park-like areas similar to that proposed in the Apex improvement plan.

⁴. Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965, as amended, United States Congress.

The national administrators will pay fifty percent of all such costs over and above what is usually spent for such activities. In Apex's case, that fifty percent contribution will be exactly half of whatever amount is spent, for the town has usually had no activity. Apex meets all the other criteria established by the Congress and its delegated Administrator, the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

In the Beautification Program, Apex and the Downtown Improvement Association have a wonderful device for easing the financial weight of the business area plan. This clear opportunity should not be neglected.

B. Urban Renewal

Although none is proposed in the Apex business district Improvement Plan, Urban Renewal assistance could, at a later date, become a desirable tool for the shaping of a better commercial area. Its provisions are not specifically directed at downtown planning, but have often been used for such (Laurinburg). The major features of this program are that it is directed at slum prevention through neighborhood conservation, rehabilitation of structures and the clearance and redevelopment of structures and neighborhoods.

To qualify for Urban Renewal projects, a town must have a "Workable Program" for community improvement. Apex has most of the requisite qualifications and could achieve those it does not have with little effort.

An Urban Renewal project in Apex could be used for acquiring the needed properties outlined in the plan, assisting merchants in their efforts to rehabilitate and aiding in the conservation of downtown structures. Apex's share of the costs involved could be borne by project contributions, such as donations of land, demolition and removal work, project improvements, and college hospital or university sponsored facilities.

This, too, is a generous source of funds that Apex officials should consider, should the need for this type assistance be made apparent at a latter date.

Conclusion

This, then, is what the Planning Board, Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Improvement Association, planners and numerous contributing local citizens have fashioned for the future. In one sense, it is a plan of action for the central business district's renewed appearance, improved circulation and expanded parking; in a much larger sense it is an expression of a new spirit of progress that exists in Apex.

Apex officials have clearly demonstrated through this plan that sound development and prosperous growth will not occur by accident. Now the people must confirm the plan through implementation; otherwise it counts for naught. We do well to recall Spencer's observation to the effect that "progress is not an accident, but a necessity."

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